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ADOLESCENCE, IDENTITY AND VIOLENCE

BY

© MARTY MRAZIK

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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DEDICATION

To Paul Mrazik Jr., my father, whose life left for me a legacy of truth and love; and whose vision for this world will not die; to Christa, my mom, your love and faith have never wavered and have given me the strength to go on; and to Peter, my brother, you are my best friend, hero, and example of what I want to be.

To all the young men in Canada, may you find healing for your pain, strength for your weakness, faith for your doubt, and life in the Light.

ABSTRACT

The primary focus of this thesis is the relationship between identity development and violence during adolescence. Findings suggest that adolescence is a time zone critical for development of healthy identity and that the identity project is a complex, time-consuming process. It was argued that in the absence of certain positive influences identity suffers, leaving adolescents susceptible to fragmented self-definition and more likely to engage in self-destructive, antisocial behavior. It was also proposed that society plays a definitive role in shaping identity, but it was also suggested that the contemporary social milieu provides insufficient direction and insufficient opportunity for the cultivation of developmental potential in adolescents. Moreover, increased emphasis on individual rights and decreased emphasis on social obligations and responsibilities has diminished identity in many youth. It was proposed that youth are more prone to violence when they lack of solid, coherent identity.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Background

"What do you think of me now?" "Do you like me?" During adolescence, such questions capture the sentiments of individuals trying to ascertain their place among peers. However, there was nothing typical about the context within which these questions were posed. Gary Scott Pennington, a 17 year-old honors student, asked them to his classmates after he shot his teacher and the school janitor in the small town of Grayson, Kentucky, in January, 1993 (Reed, 1993).

It appears that few people in North American society are completely exempt from the consequences of violent behavior, whether it involves being the victim of a gang shooting, or more indirectly through tax dollars used to cover the cost of crime. Some researchers claim that adolescent behavior is not more violent today than it has been at other times in history (Levine, 1987), yet the rates of national violence, drug abuse and crime among the adolescent population appear to tell a different story. It was estimated that the cost of school vandalism committed by adolescents in the United States in 1989 was between 200-600 million (Martin, 1992). Furthermore, during one school year, approximately 200,000 aggravated assaults occurred within school boundaries, of which 70,000 were physical assaults on teachers (Martin, 1992). An Ontario survey in elementary and secondary schools indicated that major assault incidents increased by over 50 percent from 1987 to 1990 (Roher, 1993). A study by the American Psychological Association reported that 45 percent of first and second graders had witnessed a mugging, 31 percent had witnessed shootings, and 39 percent had seen dead bodies (Hechinger, 1994). These statistics have received increasing attention during the past decade and have prompted school boards and government officials to delineate community and education programs addressing adolescent violence.

appeared to be the dominant infractions addressed by school authorities. Now, discussions focus on the use of metal detectors, guns and knives dominate concerns for school security. With such emerging trends, certain questions arise, such as "what are reasons for such incidence of violent behavior?; " or "what can be done to limit violence among adolescents?"

The purpose of this thesis is to portray a psychodynamic view of violence as a by-product of the adolescent's developing identity. This chapter will discuss violence as it relates to developmental psychology, examine the concept of identity as elucidated in the writings of Erik Erikson, and discuss some of the forces involved in its formation. It is hypothesized that meeting the needs and demands of the emerging identity play a pivotal role in reducing violent and aggressive behavior in adolescence.

Developmental Psychology and its Relation to Violence

Developmental psychology accepts, for the most part, that ontogeny is a complex, enduring process in which individuals are shaped by biological, emotional, psychological, and cultural forces. The goal of investigators who study human development is to describe and identify those factors that influence the dramatic changes which occur during the life span. By looking at these factors and how they affect development, one can better understand how certain behaviors, such as violence evolve.

A principle derived from developmental psychology states that specific influences precede healthy development. In the absence of such influences, certain deficits appear. However, this does not imply that in their presence the individual will experience increased maturation. Rather, when a deficiency is noted development is impeded.

This principle is observed in the work of Rene Spitz who investigated infant mortality in institutionalized children. He concluded that the high mortality rate in these infants was due to a lowered resistance to disease caused by the child's response to sterile, social conditions in which there was little or no physical or emotional contact with the mother

(Spitz, 1946). Spitz described a condition typified by the following characteristics: delayed social and cognitive development, low body weight and size, a lowered resistance to disease, irritability and inconsolability, and a lack of responsiveness to physical and social environments (Spitz, 1946). Thus the absence of nurturing led to deterioration in development (including fatalities).

Generalizing this principle to adolescent identity, it is possible that the absence of certain influences lead to greater identity deficits or to a greater possibility of negative identity. Since a foundation is not established for development of life skills and prosocial behavior, an increased incidence of destructive behavior is likely to occur. Again, the presence of positive influences do not guarantee the creation of a strong identity; rather their absence encourages a reduced identity. Erikson noted that identity is more easily definable through its absence or loss (1968). Similarly, Kroger (1989, p.13) states, "It is through such loss of ego identity or its developmental failure that opportunity does exist for understanding more normative modes of identity formation and the means by which society can provide for optimal development."

From society's perspective, if we are to thoroughly discern the issue of adolescent violence, we cannot afford to ignore the importance of identity. Gary Penington's words and actions expressed just that - a search for a defined identity within society. Through understanding deficits in cognitive, emotional, and social variables associated identity, one may better comprehend the context of violent behavior in adolescence. Ellen Greenberger states: "People who feel good about themselves have the foundation for taking on the roles and responsibilities of a serious and caring member of the society" (1984, p. 32).

The term "identity" has different meanings. Here, its definition is based upon the psychosocial theory of Erik Erikson (1968) and can be described in three aspects: Phenomenologically - the coherent sense of unity of oneself even though one may play different roles; behaviorally - the commitment to certain beliefs and values; and structurally - once formed, identity affects the ways in which one perceives the world, organizes

perception and subsequently behaves (Marcia, 1990). Therefore, when discussing "identity," it is to these three aspects which we refer.

Defining violence presents a greater challenge, for the diversity of behavior considered violent depends on such factors as the motivation underlying the behavior, differing perceptions of what constitutes violence, the difficulty of measuring such behaviors, and so forth. A comprehensive definition of violence will be presented in chapter three.

The Search for Identity

While traditional theories have generally fallen short in providing adequate explanations of adolescent behavior (Mitchell, 1975), they all agree on one thing: adolescence is a critical developmental period for defining identity. The "storm and stress" notion formulated by G. Stanley Hall in the early 1900's which hypothesized adolescence as an extended period of upheaval, rebellion and suffering has, for the most part, been discredited (Nielsen, 1991). However, the importance of defining a sense of identity during adolescence has received considerable empirical support. Muuss (1988, p. 63) states: "to complete the search for an identity, the adolescent must find an answer to the question 'who am I.' He must also establish some orientation toward the future and come to terms with the questions 'where am I going?' and 'who am I to become?'" The modern pop-music culture, which both reflects and shapes the sentiments of our youth, provides numerous examples of adolescents search for selfhood and identity. Song writer Michael W. Smith pens, "looking for a reason, roaming through the night to find my place in this world, my place in this world..."

The systematic, empirical investigation of adolescence is less than a century old, yet much has been discovered in this time frame concerning adolescence. Erik Erikson, since his landmark essay "Ego development and historical change" (1946), has become one of the foremost authorities on adolescence and contributed much to our contemporary understanding of adolescence and identity.

Erik Erikson

Erik Erikson (1902-1994) is generally acknowledged as one of the most influential psychoanalysts of this modern era. He has published numerous books and a collection of papers dedicated to examining the nature of identity formation during adolescence. Erikson provided significant innovations to classical Freudian theory that included a greater emphasis on the ego, an extension of the stages of personality development, and an expanded vision of society's influence upon personality development. Unlike earlier scholars, Erikson was concerned that his clinical experience be as broad as possible and included work with children from different cultures as well as those with emotional disturbances. Throughout his career, Erikson accepted appointments at Yale, Harvard, the Austin Riggs Center and the University of California at Berkeley. Unique to Erikson's prowess as a widely acclaimed theorist was that he never earned an academic degree; he received several honorary doctorate degrees later in his career. In his lifetime, he established several clinics for the treatment of emotionally disturbed children.

Erikson was the first psychoanalytic writer to investigate identity formation during adolescence. The theme of identity formation appears in his two award winning books, *Young Man Luther* (1958) and *Gandhi's Truth* (1969). It was Erikson who contributed the term *identity crisis*, to our everyday language, a concept which many authors have described and expanded. That Erikson would focus much time and effort researching identity ironically parallels his private search for an identity. Born to Danish parents in Germany, Erikson was abandoned by his biological father early in infancy.

However, it was years later before he discovered the truth about the status of his step-father. He was rejected by his German schoolmates because he was Jewish, but he had difficulty finding acceptance among his Jewish peers because of his Nordic features. Upon completing high school, he spent several years drifting throughout Europe. During this time, he enrolled at two art schools, but did not complete studies at either one. Eventually,

at the age of 25, Erikson received an offer to teach at a small school; it was here that he met Anna Freud and subsequently began his career studying psychoanalysis. Thus, it is not surprising with such a background that identity and the life cycle plays a central thematic role in Erikson's writing.

Erikson augmented Freud's theory of psychosexual development in three areas. First, he suggested that development of personality continues beyond adolescence and progresses through a series of eight stages that extend over the entire life span. Second, he placed a greater emphasis on the ego as an independent part of the personality. Erikson believed that ego functioning not only defended against instincts and anxiety, but preserved a sense of ego identity (or psychosocial identity). This complex inner state involves four aspects: individuality, a conscious sense of being a unique, distinct entity; wholeness and synthesis, the ego's integration of a variety of self-images; sameness and continuity, a striving for an self which integrates the past and presence to give oneself the feeling of consistency and directedness; and social solidarity, a sense that the inner self is meaningful and significant to others which enables the internalization of recognition from others. Erikson hypothesized that the process of establishing each of these aspects constitutes the primary task of the ego; one's corresponding ego identity is the product of such formulations.

Third, Erikson argued that an individual's life history and the presiding cultural and historical context were of greater consequence than one's biological make-up. His arguments concerning the importance of society's role in fostering a sturdy sense of identity will be discussed in chapter two.

Identity Development

Erikson believed that psychosocial development involves two primary features: epigenesis and crisis. He proposed that social and environmental forces influence how genetically determined stages of development are realized. Furthermore, development involves a series of conflicts which must be resolved. The source of these conflicts stem

from innate predispositions that become prominent at specific developmental stages which are met with corresponding demands of parents and society. These encounters induce a crisis which requires resolution by the ego. However, Erikson argues that stage denouement is not solely based upon positive, adaptive responses from the ego but from a balance of maladaptive and adaptive coping. It is only when an individual has resolved each conflict that the personality can continue its normal development and acquire the strength required to confront the crisis of the next stage.

In relating these principles to identity development, several important implications emerge. First, each stage is a product of previous resolutions. Therefore, since identity versus role confusion is Erikson's fifth stage of development, it is shaped by the previous four conflict resolutions. "...this stage must incorporate a *trustworthy* 'I' who has evolved as an *autonomous* individual capable of *initiating* and completing satisfying tasks modeled by significant others... " (Kroger, 1989, p. 22). Moreover, the task of developing a healthy identity in adolescence can be retarded by maladaptive ego responses in any of the prior stages. It is also impeded through negative societal influences. For instance, in Erikson's second stage, autonomy versus shame/doubt, it is important for the healthy child to be able to exercise some degree of choice, and to experience the power of their autonomous will. Social response to *will* has the potential to either instill increased confidence in the child's capacities or to inflict an enduring sense of shame. If, for example, society fails to create opportunities for genuine recognition of contributions to the social order, an individual's autonomy would be stifled and promote difficulties later on, for the adolescent attempting to define his identity.

Second, since each stage is founded upon a synthesis of previous resolutions, the individual is required to accept their history and integrate it into their current status. Identity is the first stage in the life cycle where an individual is capable of resolving the crisis of one's basic ego identity. Formal operations enable adolescents to hypothesize and to speculate, thereby enabling them to better synthesize their identity. During identity

versus role confusion, the young person is faced with the dilemma of synthesizing yet transcending earlier identifications of childhood. As previously mentioned, the ego identity is dependent upon formulating self-sameness and continuity for the establishment of an integrated self.

For some adolescents this is an anxiety-inducing task; a childhood wrought with trauma and confusion is not easily integrated into one's identity. The adaptation of a negative identity may seem preferable to the inner turmoil of identity confusion. Kroger (1989, p.16) explains:

> For some troubled adolescents, it is better to be somebody totally other than what existed during childhood rather than struggle to re-integrate the past into a present and future having some continuity with one's previous existence. There is often relief following the choice of negative identity, however destructive that solution may ultimately be.

Psychological Moratorium

Erikson used the term "psychological moratorium" to identify a period during which youth tentatively experiment with various options without being required to show success. It is a time frame when adolescents take on differing social roles and investigate divergent ideologies before taking on the more enduring commitments of adult life. Erikson explains:

> By psychological moratorium, then, we mean a delay of adult commitments, and yet it is not only a delay. It is a period that is characterized by a selective permissiveness on the part of society and of provocative playfulness on the part of youth, and yet it often leads to deep, if often transitory, commitment on the part of youth, and ends in a more or less ceremonial configuration of commitment on the part of society (Erikson, 1968, p. 104).

Erikson argues that the moratorium is a vital catalyst for healthy identity. Its importance is found in the freedom it provides adolescents to explore vocational,

ideological, romantic and political investments. However, this does not mean it is turmoil free. During this stage, the individual is in an active struggle to discover his or her inner self. Typically, adolescents contest their parent's beliefs and values, evaluate fashions, experiment with different sexual relationships or pursue radical political philosophies. Erikson contends that adolescents who have sufficient opportunity to search, experiment and try differing roles are likely to develop an identity and emerge with commitments to politics, religion, vocation and relationships.

The moratorium also offers a protective element to adolescents. Erikson argues that society should impart youth the freedom to experiment without affixing the stress and pressure of adult life. In this respect, they are free to change their values and commitments in the process and are not held accountable for errors that might be made in trying out new roles. Moreover, Erikson contends that in a rapidly changing society, the moratorium may be prolonged as a result of the multiple avenues available to youth.

Several scholars believe that the moratorium has been altered in contemporary society. Elkind (1979, 1984), Mead (1970) and Sebald (1992) contend that society has placed too much emphasis upon success, progress and achievement and as a result exerted too much stress on children. In many ways, they now experience pressures similar to adults; depicted by trends in children's fashions, entertainment avenues, and educational expectations. Elkind suggests that much of the pathology noted among youth today (suicide, substance abuse, violence) is a result of childhood stress. Therefore, much of the aberrant behavior expressed by youth can be traced to changing rules within the moratorium.

Role Experimentation

Erikson argues that experimentation with different social roles during the psychological moratorium facilitates the crystallization of identity. What allows a male to establish a sense of masculine identity is the ability to present himself in different social situations with other girls and boys, women and men. The same is also true with females (Josselson, 1987). As individuals gain experience in various roles, they obtain a picture of themselves in each situation.

The composite of these pictures brings about a stronger resolution for two reasons. First, youth develop a sense of continuity as they discover they are the same person from day to day, across situations and within various roles. Erikson termed this "self-sameness." Secondly, individuals differentiate themselves from others which helps to create a sense of uniqueness. The understanding that "I am able to take on certain roles which nobody else can" furnishes part of our uniqueness. As Kroger (1989) states, "the means by which we differentiate ourselves from other people in our lives constitutes the very core of our experiences of personal identity." Assuming different roles help to coalesce identity. For example, a 15 year-old boy is able to identify himself as a son, a brother, a boyfriend, the captain of his baseball team, an honors student, and so forth. Perspectives from these different roles give him a greater sense of identity as he integrates them into his perceived sense of self.

The Development of Choice

Without the ability to decide, to select what is right or wrong, or to choose a course of action most suited to self, identity becomes undifferentiated and robotic. Choice brings freedom, freedom brings possibilities, and possibilities expand uniqueness. The ability to make a healthy choice brings life and liberty to a person's understanding of self, and nurtures identity. Kahlbaugh and Haviland (1989, p. 370) note: "Through the uncertainty of an identity crisis, the adolescent realizes that identity is a choice actively made, rather than a decision passively accepted."

Marcia's extension of Erikson's theory of identity distinguished four identity status's which provide links to the concept of choice. The process of resolving an identity status involves crisis and commitment. During crisis, the adolescent is faced with choosing among meaningful alternatives (such as religious values, vocational choices, relational styles). In order to make a substantive choice, the individual requires both an understanding of the decision making process and the rudimentary skills involved in deciphering implications of decisions and their consequences. Moreover, with developmental events that occur during adolescence, such as the dawning of formal operations, adolescents are now faced with making choices that will directly affect their identity and which have implications for the rest of their lives. Thus the importance of fostering healthy choice-making becomes self evident and remains a vital factor in the development of a healthy identity. Parents play a significant role in nurturing their child's choice-making capacity.

The Development of Commitment

Commitment, according to Marcia, (1966) is the degree to which adolescents demonstrate a personal investment in what they are doing. Yet to be committed, they must go through a period where commitment is subordinated to uncertainty and where self-knowledge is ambiguous and continuously changing (Kahlbaugh & Haviland, 1989). In Marcia's framework, the strength of identity is related to the level of commitment. His fourth identity status, (which Marcia considers most ideal) "achieved identity," is marked by an openness to revealing thoughts and feelings, a focus on others and a high level of commitment. Here the individual commits to certain values and goals as a result of searching and struggling for a role which represents the "real" self.

Mitchell (1992) suggests that a precursor to commitment is fidelity - the desire to give one's loyalty and allegiance to someone or something greater than oneself (p. 130). Most adolescents appear motivated by this desire. But why? What purpose does membership in

a basketball team, student body, gang or club bring to the adolescent? Existential philosophy postulates that the search for meaning is a primary, driving force (Frankl, 1959). As individuals reach adolescence, they are driven to find meaning and purpose. Furthermore, with the onset of formal operations, an adolescent's mind incurs a heightened sensitivity and preoccupation with and to the words and actions of others. This creates an amplified demand for feedback from others, and they are preoccupied with how they appear. Commitment to a group enables them to gain a greater picture of who they are. Similarly, commitment to certain ideals, beliefs and values help to further define their identity. In the absence of such commitments, identity diffusion is more likely.

Significant Contribution

Being committed to a goal or group is itself not enough. Involvement in family life, in a job, in a sports club and in school must, in the adolescent's eyes, make a difference. As Mitchell (1975, p. 38) notes, "A corollary of the need for self-importance is the need to make *significant contributions* to the environment in which one lives." Not only do adolescents *appear* capable of performing adult-like activities, they recognize they *are* capable of performing these tasks. Although hampered by egocentric thinking, their minds and bodies are primed for purposeful activity that will contribute to the well being of society. Mitchell (p. 20) explains:

> They (adolescents) need involvement; they need to be important (which means more than to be thought of as important, it means being able to do important work); they need to contribute to their household; they need to be able to assert themselves and take the consequences of their actions. Most important, they need to avoid at all costs being impotent, being unimportant, and making no difference.

Kroger (1989, p. 41) states, "Social lip service to adolescent achievement cannot replace genuine opportunities provided by society for individual talents to be both realized and recognized."

Yet, the irony for youth lies in the need to prove themselves at a time when they are least equipped to do so. Adolescence brings forth an awkwardness; unrefined, inefficient and unskilled attempts at solving life's issues. Having acquired an adult physique and cognitive abilities of a mature mind, they approach life much like a novice skier equipped with new gear facing a snowy slope for the first time. The adolescent predicament lies in the fact that their raw, unrefined skills have not yet been given the opportunity to prove themselves. Thus, finding meaningful roles in society is essential to fostering their healthy identity.

Contemporary Views of Identity

Since Erikson originally penned his ideas concerning identity, many scholars have investigated the topic and expanded upon his theories and concepts. Contemporary views of identity development follow several loose premises (Santrock, 1992). First, identity development is a more gradual and less turbulent time than G. Stanley Hall and other "storm and stress" theorists imply. Second, identity development is extremely complex and neither begins nor ends with adolescence. What is pivotal to identity development in adolescence is that for the first time, physical development, cognitive development and social development advance to the point where the individual is able to sort through and synthesize childhood identities and identifications. Identity is not finalized at the end of adolescence nor does it remain stable throughout the rest of an individual's life. Third, identity formation does not occur in neat, succinct stages but involves commitment to a vocational direction, an ideological stance and a sexual orientation. Decisions require time to form and additional time to evaluate their appropriateness and viability. Over the years

of adolescence, decisions which form the core of what an individual is all about as a human being are being made, a process called the development of identity (Santrock, 1992).

Collapsed identity

Erikson's theory of identity embraces the entire life-cycle. Erikson believes that the primary objective of adolescence is to attain a secure sense of self, and to more richly define identity. Paradoxically, what becomes a key motivator for many youth is the fear of not being able to establish a secure sense of self. To these individuals , the intense longing to be a "somebody" impels their thinking and behavior. Erikson concluded, "many a late adolescent, if faced with continuing diffusion, would rather be nobody or somebody bad, or indeed, dead...than be not-quite somebody" (1959, p. 132).

The majority of youth, despite the complexity of the maturation process, are able to establish an identity and integrate themselves into society. However, some adolescents simply cannot cope with the conflicts and pressures of youth, as a result, the quest for identity is derailed, and individuals are left to experience a meaningless, directionless existence. Erikson labels this "identity diffusion."

> The adolescent who fails in the search for an identity will experience self-doubt, role diffusion, and role confusion... He will continue to be morbidly preoccupied with the opinion of others or may turn to the other extreme of no longer caring what others think and withdraw or turn to drugs or alcohol in order to relieve the anxiety that role diffusion creates (Muuss, 1988, p. 63).

The experience of identity diffusion is both painful and defeating; individuals who succumb to its futility may indulge in a wide range of antisocial actions, including self-destructive behavior. Corneau (1991), Erikson (1950), Muuss (1988), Baumeister (1989), and Nagaraja (1984) indicate that violent actions towards others are potential outcomes of adolescents who fail to develop an identity or who develop a negative identity. [Here, negative identity refers to a coping style adopted by youth who have had ideals

paraded before them which seem unattainable or who believe that others have already attained these ideals in such a manner they could never equal (Mitchell, 1992)].

The frustration of these individuals stems from the loss of self-direction and personal control in their daily lives. Having no semblance of who they are or what they want to do, their behavior stagnates and little, if anything of significance is accomplished as far as their identity project is concerned. In turn, the futility of their actions further reinforces the meaninglessness of their existence. Part of the predicament which adolescence face lies in their heightened sensitivity to their own experience, and the belief that their condition is unlike any others (Elkind, 1984). These features exacerbate identity diffusion.

Youth, for the most part, are not able to respond to this disintegrated sense of self rationally. They lack the coping skills to take productive action, and are often ruled by affect. Feelings of frustration and futility are translated into free floating anger. The resentment towards their feelings of worthlessness are easily projected onto their environment. As a result, destructive actions against their environment are of little consequence to them, they simply parallel the self-hatred that exists in these individuals. As Bob Dylan once penned "when you ain't got nothing, you ain't got nothing to lose."

Therefore, the importance of identity is confirmed by those who struggle in its absence - as with the case with identity diffusion.

Summary

Research indicates adolescent violence is growing at startling rates and has increased in severity during the past decade. Youth are on both sides of the problem, being both the perpetrators and victims of violence. However, few theories have effectively explained the causes behind the high incidence of violence among adolescents.

Developmental psychology proposes that ontogeny is a complex, enduring process in which individuals are shaped by biological, emotional, psychological, social and cultural forces. These influences are required to foster developmental potentials. However, this

does not necessarily imply that in their presence the individual will experience a greater level of maturation or success. Rather, it is argued that in the absence of these influences that developmental impairment occurs, resulting in aberrant behavior. This argument is applied to the development of identity in adolescents.

Erik Erikson, one of the most influential psychodynamic scholars emphasized the importance of nurturing identity. He postulates that the identity project is a distinct stage in the life cycle that takes form during adolescence although it has roots in childhood and infancy. It is a complex, time-consuming task that requires much support and guidance from the surrounding social milieu. Erikson argues that the impetus which drives youth to define identity is so powerful that youth will go to many extremes, including adopting a disposition of negativism, to attain identity. Those who are unable to achieve this goal are prone to pathological behavior, including self-destructive violence.

Erikson believes that adolescents require a transition period in which they can experiment with various ideological, vocational, relational and political commitments before they take on the responsibilities of adulthood. This period, which he labels the "moratorium," enables youth to experiment with various social roles which facilitates continuity and self-sameness of ego identity. It is also a time frame which channels the energy of youth into outlets of significance to society. They are also able to work under the helpful eye of adults who teach the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. Therefore, having experimented with different roles and identities and learning that their skills are meaningful within the social milieu, adolescents are able to formulate an identity and integrate themselves into society.

At present, scholars have continued to expand upon Erikson's concept of identity, their research has identified important variables relevant to the identity project. Some investigators focus on the rapid economic and technological changes of the past several decades, suggesting that they have exerted a profound impact upon adolescents, consequently, the task of formulating an identity is more difficult than in the past.

Therefore, an investigation into the contemporary influences upon identity and their relationship with violence seems warranted.

CHAPTER 2

Society and Identity

Introduction

In the last century, automation, mass production, and microtechnology have evolved to dominate the economic climate and the cultural milieu to shape the business world as well as our private lives. Home computers, facsimiles and cellular phones are now everyday fare for North Americans. Distances that previously took weeks, even months, to perambulate are now reached within hours. Worldwide telecommunications link people and continents within seconds. Such changes in communication and transportation have dramatically altered the way people relate with one another. They have also shaped the manner in which younger generations are prepared for involvement in society.

In post modern society, individual survival requires specialized understanding of even the most fundamental aspects of daily life. For example, finding a suitable place to live involves consideration of one's financial status, mortgage rates, suitability of location (in terms of safety; proximity to work and school), expected permanence, availability of property and so forth. Such complexity is reflected in the job market where even entry-level occupations require specialized training. Universities and colleges engulf a spectrum of vocational options, with many disciplines now extending beyond undergraduate studies. As a result, post-modern society has blossomed into what Gergen (1991) terms the *technologies of social saturation.*

> "These immerse us ever more deeply in the social world, and expose us to more and more to the opinions, values, and lifestyles of others...as we become increasingly conjoined with our social surroundings, we come to reflect those surroundings. There is a *populating of the self*, reflecting in the infusion of partial identities through social saturation (p. 49).

The goal of this chapter is to examine the impact of these social influences upon adolescent identity. Specifically, the writings of Erik Erikson, Christopher Lasch and

David Elkind will be explored. An examination of adolescence as it has evolved in the context of a changing society will first be described; I will begin with an examination of the historical evolution of adolescence as it is defined today.

The History of Adolescence

An interest in adolescence as a recognized stage in development is traced to the Greeks where Plato and Aristotle (430 - 320 BC) commented about the nature of youth. Both writers described the growth of children in developmental terms, believing that maturity occurred in progressive, age-bound stages. However, during the middle ages (500-1500 AD.), the conception of developmental stages was lost in wake of the homunculus theory. From the standpoint of this theory, the difference between children and adults was essentially quantitative.

Jean Jacques Rousseau rekindled the notion of stage theory with his classic *Emile*. He described four discrete stages of child development and argued that treating the child like a miniature adult is inappropriate, even harmful. His ideas about adolescence were speculative and other scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth century had to bridge the gap between the ideas of philosophers and the empirical approach of scientists.

In wake of the industrial revolution, change dominated the social fabric of society. Prior to industrialization, communities functioned primarily as agrarian societies in which members passed relatively unobtrusively from their roles as children to their roles as workers and parents. Individuals were treated as children until puberty, after which they were quickly initiated into adult life. However, the overriding belief which viewed children as small adults persisted with the industrial revolution where children were exploited as cheap labor throughout the expanding work force. Not until the early nineteenth century did the idea of adolescence as a unique phase in the life-cycle distinguish itself.

The period of 1890-1920 is considered the beginning of the age of adolescence. The primary features of this era were a removal of adolescents from the work force and their

placement into the institutionalized work force. This transition is described by Alvin Toffler (1980): "As work shifted out of the fields and the home, children had to be prepared for factory life...If young people could be pre-fitted in the industrial system, it would ease the problems of industrial discipline later on. The result was another central structure of all modern societies: mass education" (p. 57).

Education in an industrial society increased in importance because young people needed to learn literacy skills to advance in the working class. Industrialized society required workers with more formal education to perform increasingly sophisticated tasks. Young people also became conditioned to factory work, an altogether different routine from agrarian work. Factory employment follows rigid schedules and the rhythm of the clock. Thus the format of the school day followed suit with its disciplined time slots and short lunch hours. As Elkind (1984) notes, "being a student or pupil marked young people as being in a special apprenticeship position in society" (p. 21)

During the early part of the twentieth century, the status of youth continued to change with the enactment of child-labor laws and compulsory schooling. These reflected society's new attitudes: a highly industrialized society needed a period between childhood and adulthood. It is noteworthy that in the transition from an agricultural to a post-industrial society, we find almost no period known as adolescence in the former, yet we see a defined, distinct phase in the latter.

Recent societal trends have forced youth to cope with the pressure and stress of adult life. Many adults today are so involved in dealing with divorce, remarriage, careers and leisure that there is little time left for their children. As a result, many teens grow up without adequate adult support and guidance. The media has played a pivotal role in exposing adolescents to adult sexuality, violence and unemployment. Teens are bombarded with consumer ideals and pressured into a more "mature" image. Such influences shape the way adolescents see themselves and their place in society. The result has a profound impact on their sense of personal identity.

Erikson

Many defining features of Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development have been discussed in Chapter One. However, Erikson's observations on the impact of the social milieu upon identity have been reserved for this chapter.

Erikson's conceptualization of development differed from Freud's by placing greater emphasis on the environment. Erikson contended that an individual's life history and the cultural context were of great consequence. He de-emphasized inborn sexual and aggressive instincts and believed that psychoanalysis should pay greater attention to adaptive forces and the presiding cultural milieu. Erikson states, "traditional psychoanalytic method cannot quite grasp identity because it has not developed terms to conceptualize the environment" (1968, p. 24).

Erikson believed society helps to promote positive identity through the provision of support and expectations. Social affirmation is provided through mutually enhancing relationships, initially experienced with one's primary care givers. The support of significant others remains a vital source for fostering a firm sense of identity, especially during the adolescent years. Society also provides promise of a workable and effective life plan through the provision of sanctioned roles. These include future occupational statuses (such as a doctor, carpenter, or teacher) and familial positioning (mother, father, aunt, uncle).

As delineated in Chapter One, Erikson advocated a psychological moratorium, an important interval in the life cycle where the individual gains in self-esteem and social recognition. However, Erikson did not imply that moratorium youth automatically attain a healthy identity. He believed that sustained, personal effort is required; society catalyzes this process by providing adolescents with the freedom and time to mature. Moreover, a culture helps to enrich and perpetuate itself by enabling individuals to find viable roles within the existing order.

Erikson postulated that social influences are not always beneficial. Sometimes conflicting values are presented to members, as in the case of stressing both cooperation and competition (Lefrancois, 1989). Societies can also stress one set of values too highly, as in academic or athletic achievement. In this case, some individuals find themselves unable to attain certain ideals or discover that others have already attained them and adopt what Erikson terms, "negative identity." Here the individuals adopt a coping style that "is more than merely rejecting what parents or teachers or society expects; it is actively and energetically doing what is opposite of what is expected" (Mitchell, 1992).

Significance in Society

As identified in Chapter One, an underlying drive which compels youth to discover a sense of identity, positive or negative, is the quest for significance and importance. The search for significance may lead youth to pursue ideologies that offer social acceptance and clearly defined roles. This would explain adolescents vulnerability to associating with cults and icons of popular culture. Erikson asserted that society must take responsibility for youth through providing viable opportunities for significance. Identity crisis, the temporary state of confusion concerning self definition, is resolved by the acceptance of clearly defined, yet personally acceptable social roles. Erikson contended that even isolated groups, such as juvenile delinquents, require help in discovering a new sense of identity. This is achieved through the provision of other social roles and opportunities in which they can define themselves. Erikson believed that widespread criminality was the result of the adult generation failing to provide viable options for youth (Erikson, 1969).

Christopher Lasch and the Minimal Self

Christopher Lasch, professor of history at the University of Rochester, has gained increasing recognition for his political and cultural commentary. He has written over a dozen books and received several prestigious awards, including the American Book Award

in 1980 for his widely acclaimed, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an age of Diminishing Expectations.* However, like most distinguished authors, his commentary has not gone without criticism. Specifically, Lasch has been chastised for his pessimistic views, his moralistic condemnation of culture and a "personal style which clings to honorable values of the Victorian era" (Lears, 1979, p. 407). Dennis Wrong (1979) assesses Lasch as "an elitist who belittles the supposedly progressive aspects of our culture" (p. 411). Despite these charges, Lasch has maintained an image, even among his most prominent critics, as an author who intelligently and provocatively "sheds new light on the current crisis of American Culture" (Brytonski, 1991).

Lasch's politically and socially minded books paint a vivid picture of American society and its erosion. In *The Agony of the American Left* (1969) and *Haven in a heartless World: the Family Besieged* (1977), he examines how entrepreneurial capitalism has dismantled traditional institutions and values in favor of the creation of a bureaucratic, consumption-oriented society. He addresses such issues as cultural phobia towards old age, the current void of spiritual values, and changes in the family structure. He takes a special interest in discussing emptiness in social life, the theme of his most recent effort, *The Minimal Self.* (1984). Lasch uses the concept of "psychic survivalism" to describe the prevailing societal demeanor adopted to cope with the emptiness of private life. While Lasch's work provides many provocative insights, this thesis will concentrate on consumerism, narcissism and freedom of choice.

Consumerism

In Lasch's critique of society, industrialization, mass production and mass consumption are prominently displayed. Consumerism, he argues, reduces the power and significance of the individual. At one level, this appears contradictory to the image we have of society when one considers the limitless possibilities an individual possesses. The freedoms society grants include a vast selection of occupations and lifestyles, in addition to

the ability to choose among literally an infinite number of products on the consumer market. With such boundless possibility, one would predict an enriched, unfettered self. Herbert Gans (1980) believes that society is only now progressing from a restricted, regimented social structure toward one where an individual can experience freedom and autonomy. Similarly, Naissbitt (1982) suggests that in an information society such as ours, an individual-oriented social philosophy is best suited.

In spite of these claims, it can be argued that freedom stifles personal identity more than it enhances it. Lasch extends this argument through a critique of the structure that upholds a consumer society. He contends that consumerism reduces personal power through shrewdly coercing individuals into becoming dependent upon the market for their needs. Instead of becoming autonomous and self-sufficient, individuals rely on sources outside themselves for the provision of even basic needs. Lasch explains: "the social arrangements that support a system of mass production and mass consumption tend to discourage initiative and self-reliance and to promote dependence, passivity and a spectatorial state of mind both at work and at play. Consumerism is only the other side of the degradation of work - the elimination of playfulness and craftsmanship from the process of production" (1984, p. 32). This undermining of independence leads to a loss of trust in oneself and a greater reliance on society, symbols and consumer products.

Consumerism and Identity

Lasch provides an interesting link between consumerism and identity. He argues that it is not so much the availability of things which becomes problematic in a consumer society but the ideals and fantasies they evoke. The consumer, says Lasch, "lives in a world that has no objective or independent existence and seems to exist only to gratify or thwart his desires" (p.30). With such ideals consistently paraded, it becomes difficult to separate a sense of oneself from such a paragon. Connectedness to fantasy inhibits the process of distinguishing oneself from images pursued. In Lasch's words, "Identity has

become uncertain and problematical not because people no longer occupy fixed social states...but because they no longer inhabit a world that exists independently of themselves (p.32) Thus, developing an identity in a consumer society becomes a difficult process since self-definition is clouded by an array of images and ideals which obscures the ability to define what one is and isn't. The end result is that as image is pursued, identity is weakened.

Narcissism

In *The Culture of Narcissism* Lasch traces the social and psychological effects of the shift from entrepreneurial to bureaucratic capitalism. Lasch argues that this shift has reduced the plight of a majority of citizens to a condition of dependence and eroded the capacity for self-help and self-discipline. Moreover, as a greater number of people find themselves disqualified from the performance of adult responsibilities, "narcissistic dependence begins to pervade American culture" (Lasch, 1979, p.411). This is characterized by a strategy of living which adopts a survivalistic mentality, one that encourages "living for the moment," "keeping your options open," as well as an avoidance of moral or emotional commitments.

Furthermore, Lasch argues that a culture organized around mass production and consumption encourages narcissism because it compels its members to become weak and dependent. In neglecting our own private standard in favor of measuring ourselves against others, we learn to evaluate ourselves primarily through their eyes. This, according to Lasch, leads to "an unprecedented attention to superficial impressions and images, to the point where the self becomes almost indistinguishable from the surface" (p.30). The core of who we are becomes fused with the images of society around us. Persons concentrate on the image they project and are less concerned with accumulated skills, experience and underlying integrity. Performance outweighs character. Such is the nature of Lasch's

"minimal self," a new personality structure that exhibits, in varying degrees, the characteristics of pathological narcissism.

Lasch defines narcissism as "the disposition to see the world as a mirror, more particularly as a projection of one's own fears and desires" (p.33). His description stresses a lack of personal autonomy and individuation. Fromm (1973) used a more comprehensive definition:

> Narcissism can then be described as a state of experience in which only the person himself, *his* body, *his* needs, *his* feelings, *his* thoughts, *his* property, everything and everybody pertaining to *him* are experienced as fully real, while everybody and everything that does not form part of the person or is not an object of his needs is not interesting, is not fully real... (p. 201).

These descriptions of narcissism reflect an immersion in selfishness. Narcissistic individuals seek self-gratification and avoid people or situations that thwart the attainment of personal desires. The narcissist primarily sees the world around him existing to grant wish fulfillment and remove undesirable obstacles. Furthermore, the narcissist believes he is entitled to certain rights and privileges, not because they are earned, but because of who he is. His personal worthiness justifies his attainment of such a lofty status. Consequently, narcissists lack objectivity, they do not apply rules of social interaction consistently. An individual may believe he is entitled to special treatment, but cannot see that others are equally deserving of the same treatment; he subjectively distorts privileges to favor his own self. As a result, entitlement (the belief that a person is owed services and freedoms without obligation) becomes a predominant focus for narcissists. The issue of entitlement in society is discussed in Chapter Four.

Narcissism and Identity

Narcissism is a complex construct with many causes and implications beyond the scope of this paper. It would be difficult to discuss the many aspects of narcissism and

link their relationship to identity. However, the crux of Lasch's commentary discusses the prevalence of self-serving behavior in our culture and how it has led to diminished identity.

Lasch contends that narcissism undermines identity by corrupting altruism and social interest. As a result, it becomes problematic for adolescents who, in coming to an integrated sense of themselves, must form relationships with those around them. Their capacity to establish meaningful relationships with others is dependent upon the youngster's ability to give rather than not just to take. Intimate friendships require a willingness to sacrifice self-gratification in order to achieve cooperation and mutual compatibility. Those who are ensnared in narcissistic patterns often find themselves at odds with others because of their self focus. In relation to identity, Mitchell (1992) states, "minimal selves have an impoverished identity because they lack allegiance to any kind of social system capable of directing their lives, or lending meaning to it."
Therefore, according to Lasch, the social forces of consumerism and individualism have inflamed proclivity towards narcissism, which in turn has diminished the capacity to relate to one another in a selfless manner. As a result, identity has suffered in the wake of diminished responsibilities towards others.

Freedom of Choice

Lasch argues that a consumer society is predicated on freedom and choice. (Advocates of pluralism celebrate it as a freedom of limitless possibilities.) This freedom implies that individuals are empowered to choose any lifestyle they prefer. Lasch asserts that pluralism leads us to believe that we can pursue any alternative concurrently with any other; that one choice does not preclude another; and that an open selection of 'cultural options' does not escalate into a conflict of values. The idea that 'you can be anything you want,'" contends Lasch, " has come to mean that identities can be adopted and discarded like a change of costume" (p. 38).

However, such a belief "robs choice of its meaning by denying that its exercise leads to any important consequences" (p. 36). Lasch affirms that the belief in a multitude of options simultaneously available to the individual is an illusion created by an image-endorsing society. "In real life, every moral and cultural choice of any consequence rules out a whole series of other choices" (p.38). In its true sense, choice mandates the selection of one thing *over* another, a concept antithetical to the mindset of consumerism. Nonetheless, in a society that devotes so much time and attention to image and ideology, the distinction between what is real and what is fantasy wanes. Thus individuals persist in maintaining that they can have or be "the best of both worlds."

As previously stated, Lasch's descriptions of society have received both favorable and dissenting reviews. Some critics believe that Lasch clings to a moralistic conservatism that provides nothing more than a fatalistic, superficial view of society. Others believe he is able to make sense out of American society at a time when others can only despair over its complexity. However his views are perceived, they provide valuable insights into society's impact upon adolescent identity. These will be discussed in the summary portion of this chapter.

David Elkind

David Elkind completed his Ph.D. at UCLA. During a postdoctoral internship at the Austin Riggs Center, he was introduced to the work of Piaget, who later became his mentor. As a result, much of Elkind's research has been an attempt to replicate and extend Piaget's theory and research.

The work of David Elkind has enriched our understanding of the status of children and adolescents in the 80's and 90's. He has established himself as a psychologist who applies research and theory to practical, problems. He is best known for his attempts to integrate Piaget's concepts to educational and social problems of youth. Elkind has written extensively about egocentric thinking in adolescents; he popularized the concepts of

"imaginary audience," "personal fable," and "cognitive conceit," which have received a certain measure of empirical support. In total, Elkind (as of this writing) has authored 10 books, and more than 30 articles in professional journals.

In keeping with his pragmatic approach to child psychology, Elkind's recent publications have forwarded hypotheses connecting social pathology and adolescence. He emphasizes that society has placed the demands of adult life upon children before they are socially or emotionally prepared for them. In Elkind's words, "there is simply no protected place for teenagers in today's hurried and hurrying society" (1984, p. viii). In essence, Elkind argues that society has denied youth identities appropriate to childhood and adolescence. As a result, "hurried children" (as Elkind labels them) become vulnerable to the interpersonal conflicts usually delayed until adulthood.

Elkind's Description of Adolescent Identity

Elkind adheres to Erikson's belief that the primary task of the teenage years is to construct a viable sense of personal identity. He sees this occurring largely as a product of the maturation process. Teenagers, as they progress through formal operations are able to construct theories, to think hypothetically, to view their own thoughts more objectively (as opposed to egocentrically), and to think propositionally. These cognitive devices enable them to construct a theory about themselves, and consequently to better define and pursue their personal identity.

Elkind argues that two basic needs are required for healthy identity, the first being a clearly demarcated period of adolescence. In line with Erikson's arguments, the moratorium is a time adolescents require to begin construction of a mature personal identity. Here, they experiment with social roles and expectations related to the demands of adult life. It is a period when adolescents need special protection and recognition from society to discover a sense of themselves before their more intense involvement in the adult world. According to Elkind, the absence of such a moratorium impairs the formation of

self-definition. It also exposes adolescents to the stress and pressure of adult life, forces they are not yet equipped to handle. In the words of Elkind:

> A secure sense of self, of personal identity, allow the young person to deal with both inner and outer demands with consistency and efficiency. This sense of self is thus one of the teenager's most important defenses against stress. By impairing his or her ability to construct a secure personal identity, society leaves the teenager more vulnerable and less competent to meet the challenges that are inevitable in life (p. 5)

Elkind also is of the belief that the psychological moratorium because it places adolescents in a distinct place in the social order. This hierarchical position places them below adult authority, a placement vital for their developing identity. Authority enables control over maladaptive behavior (an important concept in dealing with violence or delinquency). It is also important for setting the context in which adolescents are able to learn. Elkind explains:

> When teenagers interact with adults whose authority they respect, they can have productive, if painful battles over ideas and actions. Such adults provide healthy opponents against whom to test their own opinions and values. But when adult authority is undermined or lost, the adult is no longer marked as one to be attended to and to learn from" (p. 112).

Authority is also implicated with the second need adolescents have in constructing identity: a clearly defined value system against which to test other values. In defining themselves, youth need a standard against which to measure the legitimacy of their emerging beliefs. This is illustrated in the separation-individuation process outlined by Blos (1967). Blos contends that in defining a sense of personal autonomy, children go through a primary detachment from the parental figure and adolescents go through a similar process in their teen years. For maturation of the ego status, the adolescent must disengage from an internalized parental representation. Blos believes that the strength and

distinctiveness of the parental icon is related to the adolescent's ability to define himself or herself. Adolescents who do not have a clear sense of their parent's values and beliefs have difficulty formulating their own. Therefore, Elkind affirms the importance of adult authority in the development of adolescent identity.

Two Approaches to Identity Development

Elkind believes the path to a healthy identity in adolescents occurs through one of two methods, differentiation (which also involves integration) or substitution. He believes that both parenting and social climate are critical to determining which path youth travel.

Growth by differentiation "is conflictual, time-consuming, and laborious" (p. 15), different situations in which one's thoughts, feelings and beliefs can be compared and contrasted with those of other people. Conversely, it demands that individuals attain a picture of similarities between self and others in terms of social mores and modes of conduct. This type of growth also requires an individual to recognize and accept the various aspects of their personality. Integration of experiences contributes to a stable, enduring self-concept. As Elkind notes, "A well-defined sense of self and identity provides us with effective strategies for managing psychological stress - the major stress in our society (p. 16).

The second method of identity formation described by Elkind is "substitution." This is a reactionary style which adapts to the demands of the overriding societal context. It requires the ability to quickly decipher the most important skills needed for survival. Individuals follow the example of others familiar with given trends. Substitution involves conformism which ensures fitting into the governing social milieu. It is a sense of self constructed by the simple addition of feelings, thoughts and beliefs copied from others, amounting to what Elkind calls the "patchwork self." Such a person:

> ...is not in touch with the deeper core of his or her being. Young people who have a self-constructed by substitution are easily swayed and influenced by

> others because they do not have a clear definition of their own self. Teenagers with a patchwork self have not developed an inner core of consistency and stability that allows them to deal with new situations in terms of past experiences (p.16).

Healthy Identity

An integrated sense of identity "means bringing together into a working whole a set of attitudes, values, and habits that can serve both self and society." The more integrated the adolescent is with respect to self and identity, the more able he or she is to manage basic stress. Adolescents require time and protection from adult pressures to ensure development of a healthy identity. When this does not occur, Elkind believes their identity suffers, which in turn reduces their capacity to cope with psychological stress. Moreover, this leads to an increase in pathological responses, including suicide, drug addiction and violence.

Once again, Elkind's premise concerning adolescent development emphasizes that society has unfairly burdened youth with the pressures and stresses of adult life. This has resulted in the "hurried child" forced to grow up before he or she is cognitively, psychologically and socially ready. One definitive feature of such hurried individuals is the "patchwork self," a poorly integrated and superficial identity structure. Elkind believes this style of identity is not conducive to coping with the duties and responsibilities of adult life. Therefore, Elkind believes that the rise in maladaptive behaviors (including suicide, substance abuse and violence) is related to their deficient sense of self. What follows is a brief examination of trends which Elkind believes have led to a patchwork identity followed by a discussion of how these trends have affected the development of identity in youth.

Social Trends

Elkind believes a loss of "markers" characterizes modern society. Markers "are external signs of where we stand," which "confirm our sense of growing and changing," and are vital to developing of a sense of self because they provide social recognition of growth. Markers usually encompass new responsibilities and restraints, as well as greater freedoms. They delineate distinct stages of growth as well as serve as beacons of the future. Elkind's concept of markers is related to rights of passage previously discussed in Chapter One.

Elkind claims that several traditional childhood markers have been lost. Clothing is one. Several decades ago, dressing to the current fashion was not associated with childhood. Children were clothed in outfits unique to their developmental stage. Dressing in formal clothing (except for special family occasions) was not considered appropriate. However, today, young children are clothed in fashionable outfits. Girls wear make-up and jewelry which traditionally (in North American culture) is not worn until adolescence. Boys are also encouraged to look and dress beyond their age. The media plays a vital role in bombarding adolescents with fashionable, trendy images.

Activities for children and adolescents have also changed over in the past four or five decades. In the 1950's children were encouraged to freely engage in playful activities, to foster their imagination with fantasy. Involvement in competitive sports, for the most part, was limited to youth high school age and older. Most children were required to wait until they reached junior high school before they could participate in organized team sports. Today, training programs, athletic teams, and advanced competitions for young children flourish. These encourage a highly competitive spirit and immerse children in adult sentiments of commitment, dedication and achievement of success. Elkind also contends that schooling and academics presently encourage youth to achieve at higher levels and with the same intensity as adults. This is exemplified by the increasing popularity of early start programs in elementary school, opportunities for adolescents to earn advanced college

credits in high school, and the multitude of specialized education programs offered in addition to compulsory schooling.

"Innocence" constitutes another childhood marker which has disappeared. Elkind argues that in this regard, the media has played a pivotal role. The complexity of sexuality, the ramifications of violence and crime, the destruction associated with substance abuse are issues that parents stringently avoided exposing their children to several decades ago. However, the mass media (cable television, radio, magazines) expose children to these topics. It is virtually impossible for a parent to prevent exposure. Elementary-aged children freely use jargon associated sex, violence, crime or drugs. Elkind believes this trivializes knowledge about these aspects of social life, and that this trivialization carries over to identity development.

One final trend that Elkind notes has influenced adolescent identity is "family permutations." These constitute any rearrangement of the existing family structure, and include separation, divorce, single-parent families, blended families and a smaller nuclear family unit. Today, over 50 percent of marriages end in divorce and by the turn of the century it is estimated that over one half of children will live in single-parent families (Dafoe-Whitehead, 1993). More children are living with step-parents and step-siblings. Furthermore, violence and aggression are more common in single-parent families and blended families than in traditional two-parent families (Gelles, 1989; Pillay, 1987; Livingston, 1986).

Elkind argues that family permutations are distressing to adolescents because they create additional demands and require greater adaptation on the part of children. The adolescent identity project is already a complicated task filled with crisis, unresolved questions, and a struggle to define one's selfhood. In addition, adolescents' thought process distorts their perception of events and interactions with others by magnifying the intensity of their experience (Elkind labels this as "the imaginary audience" or "personal fable"). Therefore, additional stressors resulting from intense parental conflict, divorce,

and re-marriage further complicate the task of identity formation and force youth to rework the elements of their identity that were already well in place.

Elkind notes several particularly problematic outcomes of family permutations. First, the parental support and guidance so vital to adolescent growth is often omitted. During family disruptions, parents must cope with their own levels of stress and hurt; it becomes very easy to be preoccupied with their own needs that the psychological and emotional needs of their children are neglected. Second, adolescents' developing framework of values and beliefs are often prematurely activated. Children from broken homes are often left to take over many responsibilities of the absent parent and are forced to make decisions that normally an adult would make; sometimes this includes choosing allegiance to one parent or another. As a result, these pressures do not allow adolescents the appropriate time which Erikson (1950) and Marcia (1966, 1987) observe is needed for identity. In this respect, the identity project is complicated and impaired by family permutations

Social Trends and Adolescent Identity

Elkind proposes that current social trends have negative implications for identity. First, a clearly demarcated period of development which gives adolescents the needed respite before assuming adult responsibility and decision making has been eliminated. According to Elkind, the current generation of young people is being denied the time frame required to assemble a workable sense of self. They are no longer given special status and protection from society. He believes adolescents have lost markers which previously helped to define them. For example, adolescents are now exposed to every aspect of adult life which require them to make decisions about sexuality, drugs and crime. Likewise, children are engaged in similar leisure activities and follow comparable clothing fashions to the older generation. Because of these trends, adolescents are not distinguished from adults in terms of the issues they face.

Second, Elkind believes that society has added an inordinate amount of stress to the lives of young people. Teenagers now experience substantial pressure to conform to the styles of fashions of adults. Adolescents are tantalized with a multitude of consumer images at a time in their development when they are sensitive to the evaluations of others. This increases pressure to conform to the expectations of peers as well as to the images presented by society. They encounter adult-like stress associated with achieving high standards in academics, athletics or the arts. Elkind advocates that adolescents are no longer able to freely explore a multitude of social roles.

Elkind claims adolescents experience stress from family permutations. Individuals dealing with these predicaments must cope with guilt, anger, helplessness, and grief in addition to thoughts typical of adolescent thinking (the imaginary audience, personal fable). As a result, much energy previously aimed at resolving problems associated with identity development is now directed to coping with stress associated with these permutations. Elkind states, "In effect, the teenager's new social status as a result of divorce complicates the task of identity formation - it forces him or her to rework the elements of the definition of his or her identity that were already in place" (1984, p. 103).

In addition, parents, a vital source of guidance and growth in adolescence, shift their focus away from their children as they attempt to cope with their own private needs. This "parental egocentrism" reduces the ability of adults to form healthy bonds with their children. In fact, the adolescent may become a confidant and source of emotional support to the parent at a time when this should be reversed. Moreover, parental values which serve as a template for adolescents to develop their own value system, are questioned and diminished. Such conditions hurry youth into adult life before they have sufficient time to solidify their own private identity.

Finally, Elkind believes that permutations lead to a loss of parental authority. Adolescents who experience parental separation, divorce or remarriage are more apt to see their parents as vulnerable and distraught. Furthermore, children of parents in these

situations often carry resentment toward their parents. Research has indicated that adolescents from broken homes view their parents more unfavorably than adolescents from intact homes (Spanier & Slick, 1981). As a result, parents lose authority which enables them to guide and direct their child's behavior. Some research supports the observation that loss of control becomes a major issue facing parents following a divorce or separation. (Gelles, 1989).

The product of all these forces, according to Elkind, is a transition from an integrated to a substituted identity. This patchwork self is unable to integrate the personality, hence producing a superficial, insecure identity less able to cope with the stress inevitable faced in society. Elkind describes the double-bind predicament adolescents face: "[society] has rendered them more vulnerable to stress while at the same time exposing them to new and more powerful stresses than were ever faced by previous generations of adolescents (1984, p. 6). Elkind believes that unless society grants adolescents the appropriate place in society they require, pathological behavior will continue to increase.

Summary

An historical overview of society reveals that dramatic changes have taken place in the past century, advances which hold tremendous implications for the status of youth in society. Specifically, adolescence has been recognized as a distinct phase of development that is qualitatively different from both childhood and adulthood. Furthermore, it is believed that society plays a pivotal role in shaping identity in the adolescent population. Erik Erikson, Christopher Lasch and David Elkind have provided useful critiques of the prevailing cultural milieu that embody direct implications for the identity process.

All three authors agree that society influences identity. Erikson, from a psychoanalytic perspective, believes personality growth occurs through successive stages that involve resolution of psychosocial conflicts experienced at each stage. Identity, being the fifth stage of personality development, requires integration of previous resolutions in addition to

transcendence of new conflicts. Society catalyzes this process through the provision of nurturance and support, the development of expectations upon the individual, and arrangement of adult roles into which the individual can conform. Although Lasch's axiom's of society are not directed towards adolescent identity, he believes the current social milieu has evolved into a narcissistic orientation as a result of the shift to entrepreneurial capitalism. In such a setting individuals are prone to "psychic survivalism," a mentality that strives to maintain an inflated image in order to fill an underlying emptiness. Consequently, one's character and identity are lost in wake of a diminishing self. David Elkind believes society enhances identity by providing a protected time period in which an individual is able to experiments with social roles and define personal values and beliefs. Elkind believes societal trends have eroded the distinctiveness of this time frame, thereby swamping adolescents with stress and immersing them in the pressures of adulthood before they are developmentally ready.

Erikson relates the importance of choice and commitment to identity, arguing that both ingredients are required for the attainment of an occupational status and ideological framework basic to identity. In a similar vein, Lasch sees choice as demanding both commitment and consequence. The power of choice is lost when these two aspects are not involved. Lasch believes the pluralistic idealism that pervades current society diminishes the power of choice and consequently, the pursuit of an integrated identity has been lost.

Both Erikson and Elkind are advocates of a moratorium period for adolescents, although they hold somewhat differing views concerning its purpose. Erikson stresses that during adolescence the ego must integrate previous experiences in order to develop self-sameness and continuity. Thus one's history plays a vital role in identity formation. Rejection of one's past leads to negative identity, a personality structure that opposes society values. He emphasizes the moratorium to protect immature youth from the stresses and pressures of adult life.

These authors share the belief that experimentation is important. Elkind's "integrated self" parallels Erikson's conception of identity as both involve a time-consuming, elaborate construction and integration of the many subsets of the personality. Both scholars regard parents as paramount to the development of adolescent identity. Although Erikson has delineated the psychodynamic nature of the parent-child bond to a much greater extent than Elkind, each sees parental values serving as a template for the emerging ideological framework for the child.

Lasch and Elkind contend that social trends of the past several decades have made defining identity more difficult, although their reasoning differs. Lasch provides a more political commentary, attributing capitalistic conventions such as consumerism for undermining the ability to define one's identity. Elkind argues that society has destroyed psychological markers which help to define adolescence as a unique period of growth which allows adolescents to better develop and pursue an identity. However, both authors stress that the standard which people measure themselves is through the image they project. Moreover, individuals compare their personal icon to societal projections and symbols. The resulting identity structures described by both men (Elkind's "patchwork self" and Lasch's "minimal self") are characterized by an unstable and, in some respects, undignified sense of self.

CHAPTER 3

Violence - Definitions and Descriptions

Introduction

Thus far this thesis has spoken to the issue of adolescent identity. Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of development was presented as a framework for understanding identity. Furthermore, the impact of society upon identity was investigated from the perspective of Erik Erikson, Christopher Lasch and David Elkind. This chapter will focus on the concept of violence, and later chapters will attempt to integrate the two vital concepts of identity and violence.

Violence in Society

We live in an age of violence. Not a day goes buy without reports of it from some troubled part of the world. News broadcasts from television, radio, or the daily newspaper, describe violence in our society. Vivid images of wars, murders, fires and riots are viewed by virtually everyone in society. Moreover, world wide telecommunications allow for up-to-the-minute coverage of events from every corner of the globe. This has facilitated the evolution of 24-hour television news stations, now prevalent in many households across North America. These stations emphasize up-to-date accounts of worldwide news which predominantly center around violence, war and murder. Thus, as a society, we are literally confronted with violence from every angle.

The media has also played a substantial role in promoting violence in the form of entertainment within the past several decades. Many actors and actresses play leading roles as war heroes or masters of the martial arts. These individuals are held in high esteem in our culture, and are often viewed as heroes and role-models by youth. Furthermore, access to watching violence is available to virtually everyone, including young children. Scholars predict there is a television in 99 percent of North American homes (Liebert,

1983). In combination with 24 hour movie stations rock-video channels, and video outlets in every corner store, censorship of violence is essentially impossible.

Movies and television revolve around violence. Researchers have estimated that by the age of fourteen, a child has seen approximately 18,000 humans killed on television (Le Masters, 1974). During prime time, 70 percent of network programs use violence, except during children's hours when 90 percent of the programs show violence. Trends are also increasing. Before 1980, there were 18 violent acts per hour, whereas after 1980 their number was increased by television station to 26 per hour.

With violence so prevalent fear for personal safety becomes an integral part of daily living. Elaborate security systems, courses in self-defense, and petitions for stronger legislation against criminals have become hallmarks of our day. Yet beyond a mere description of the pervasiveness of violence in society, a disciplined investigation into violence seeks to address several prominent questions. Primarily, what constitutes violent behavior? It is the purpose of this chapter to provide a workable definition of violence and related concepts. Furthermore, the incidence of violence in society will be discussed followed by a brief overview of theories which concern themselves with the etiology of violent behavior.

Defining Violence

Violence is an intricate and complicated concept, and differing views are held concerning what constitutes violent behavior. Some terms are used interchangeably, when, in fact, they are not synonymous. In the literature, scholars have defined violent behavior in a variety of ways, depending upon their specific ideological framework. In sum, there is no consistent definition for what constitutes violent behavior.

Furthermore, violence is related to crime and deviance. Typically, people view violence in a negative manner, associating it with a breech in criminal law. In general, society treats violence as antithetical to moral and prosocial behavior, deserving of legal

restitution. Criminal law has defined the parameters of violent behaviors that are deserving of corporal punishment. However, not all violence is illegal. In some cases, society condones violence, such as with certain professional sports . In other instances, violence is sanctioned, as in the case of war. Again, these features complicate a discipline investigation into the study of violence.

Webster's defines violence as "the use of physical force so as to damage or injure." Marmor (1978) expands this definition, describing violence as "a specific form of force that involves the effort to destroy or injure an object perceived as an actual or potential source of frustration or danger, or as a symbol thereof" (p. 7). Both sources connote violence as damaging and injurious. However, Marmor's definition includes intentionality, thus, if the person intends injury, this would be considered violent behavior. The concept of intention is important to the definition of violence because it is this aspect that separates it from the concept of destruction. Destruction does not necessarily connote violence, although violence may be destructive. For example, a house fire may damage property, but it is not considered violence. Similarly, a child's carelessness may result in the destruction of china plate, but this does not represent violence. In contrast, throwing a rock at another person does constitute violent behavior, even if the rock misses, because intention was part of the action. Therefore, violence involves intentions as well as destruction or injury.

Aggression is another term used interchangeably with violence. However, aggression is a much broader concept and refers to any kind of behavior that encompasses inimical intent; not all aggressive behavior is violent. For example, an individual may express aggression in sporting activities. Moreover, interpersonal interactions may involve aggressive behavior, as in the case where someone yells at another person, or glares angrily. The difference is that violence implies that the aggressive action is clearly destructive in its intent. An individual crosses the line between aggression and violence when his actions are no longer meant to assert his position, but to purposefully damage an object or person. For instance, hockey players who body check each other are acting

aggressively; when they begin to fist-fight, their actions have become violent. Thus, violence is linked to aggressive intent.

Force is another concept related to, but not synonymous with violence. Marmor (1978) argues that force is a generic term referring to the "application of power to influence, restrain, or control an object, but not necessarily with destructive intent." Similarly, Webster defines force as "the exertion of physical strength." Applying these definitions to human interactions, force does not involve personal consideration. It is simply a vehicle through which control can be established.

The concepts of force and violence are illustrated by an event which occurred at Georgia State penitentiary in 1993. The prisoners at the institution had complained about poor living conditions for several months, and eventually a riot broke out, resulting in the inmates forcefully overpowering the guards. After several days of unsuccessful negotiations, the United States National Guard was called to restore order to the prison. The National guard entered the prison, overpowered the men, and restored sanctioned control of the situation. In this instance, force was used in both a negative manner (when the prisoners rioted) and a positive manner (the National Guard subduing the prisoners). It was simply the vehicle used to exert control over a given situation. The use of force in controlling violence has important ramifications in dealing with adolescents, and will be discussed in greater detail in a future chapter of this thesis.

Forms of Violence

Violence is commonly thought of as an antisocial, criminal act, exemplified by events such as rape, murder and gang violence. However, in the course of human history, violence has been legalized, as in the case of legal executions, riot control, etc.; socially ritualized, as with religious ceremonials such as in Mayan sacrifice or in sporting events; and sanctioned, as in war (Marmor, 1978). With so many forms of violence, the boundaries between what constitutes socially acceptable and unacceptable violence becomes

obscure. Criminology, the study of crime and deviance in society, is useful in its description and classification of the varying forms of deviant behavior. Thus it is to criminology that we now turn.

Crime and Criminology

The definition of crime is neither standardized nor universally accepted. Crime is a relative phenomenon, and its clear-cut definition is evasive because what is seen as crime varies by time, locale, and observer (Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 1991). As a result, criminologists have offered an array of definitions to delimit the subject matter of crime; these have varied widely in the breadth of concerns subsumed. Individuals at one end of the spectrum define crime as behavior which is prohibited by the criminal code (Michael and Adler 1933; Tappan (1949); Jeffery (1956). Sutherland (1949) has expanded the realm of criminal behavior to include any behavior that is socially harmful and penalized by the state. For example, he argues that white-collar crimes (such as government or professional conduct that leads to violation of human rights) would be included under this delineation. Others, such as Sellin (1938) have further refined a definition of crime, arguing that it encompasses the violations of conduct norms, of which criminal law is a one subset.

More recent criminological perspectives argue that theory concerning crime and deviance must extend beyond correctionalism (behaviors which violate the law or social norms) and incorporate the political and economic boundaries of a given social structure. Scholars of this ideological viewpoint maintain the definitions of Sellin and Sutherland overlook social injuries induced by the elite who control the state (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1985; Taylor Walter & Young, 1973). Taylor (1973, p.281-282) explains: "Crime is ever and always that behavior seen to be problematic within the framework of social arrangements: for crime to be abolished, then, those social arrangements themselves must also be subject to fundamental social change." From this position, crime would include any actions which violate human rights. It takes into account the greater social

milieu in defining the "criminal." Thus, the perpetrator may be an individual, a corporate body, or a political policy, and each must be subjected to judiciary action (Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 1991).

Criminology has delineated typologies which identify distinct categories of crime. These are useful in structuring a study of crime, although they are difficult to construct because of the vast disparity of deviant behaviors. Clinard and Quinney (1986) have developed one of the most widely known criminological typologies. It consists of nine categories of criminal behavior, each characterized by five theoretical dimensions. Of the nine categories, the typology relevant to this thesis is crimes associated with violence. In this typology, the authors have divided violent crime into two categories: conventional crimes and unconventional crime.

Conventional Crime

No criminal acts cause more concern to society than crimes which kill or seriously injure (Sheppard, 1971). Conventional crimes receive the most attention from the criminal justice system and public. The four categories of conventional categories are: murder, assault, rape and robbery. The Canadian Criminal code and other federal statutes lists specific crimes under each category. Typically, public perception of the rate of these offenses reflect society's belief in the fortitude of law and order within the social structure. Increases in conventional crime rates, or the occurrence of a particularly horrifying event, incites public fear of "crime waves" or "a break- down of society." For example, in Edmonton, the 1994 slaying of a city woman (a wife and mother of two children) led to a public outcry and rallies protesting the leniency of the criminal code for young offenders. Related events in communities across North America have evoked similar feelings of fear and anger.

Unconventional Crime

As alarming as conventional violence is, the quantity of non conventional violent acts surpass them by an immense margin (Gibbons, 1992). Ironically, non conventional violence is much less likely to be criminalized, and if it is, it receives much less of an reaction than does conventional crime (Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 1991). Non conventional violence is dichotomized into two categories: interpersonal violence and violent white-collar crime. The former category is distinguished from conventional violence by the nature of the relationship between the victim and offender. Family violence is the most common example of this form of violence. With white-collar crime, violence is perpetrated by major social institutions such as businesses, professions and the government.

Familial violence consists of any conventional violence that occur between members who are directly related to each other. Specific categories of familial violence recognized by criminologists include child maltreatment, wife abuse, violence towards siblings and parents, and elderly abuse. It is only within the last several decades that violence within the family has been demarcated as a specific form of violence subject to criminal law (Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 1991). Despite the recency of society's recognition of family violence as a crime, it is believed this type of violence has existed since antiquity, and comprises a significant portion of violence that occurs today (Gibbons, 1992). Estimates of the scope of family violence suggest that one-quarter of all murders and serious assaults take place within the family (Wolfgang, 1967), although this appraisal is believed to be highly conservative (Gelles, 1972). More recent estimates relate that up to 70% of murder victims are known by the murderer (Marron, 1992), and 90% of sexual offenses occur between relatives or close friends (James & Nesjleti, 1983). Dennis Kantor and William Lehr (1980) demonstrated that the closer the relational distance between victims and offenders, the less the likelihood of severity of official sanctioning. Yet because these incidents

transpire within the sociological institution of the family, they are not treated in a conventional manner.

The other form of unconventional violence, white-collar violence, has gained increasing attention in society. Examples include improper working conditions that lead to illness or death, failure to correct a faulty product (e.g.. car defects), insufficient laboratory testing of a drug or medicine, government smuggling, etc. (Coleman, 1985-p.567). It is estimated that each year, worldwide, 14,200 lives are claimed and 2 million persons are injured due to pernicious working conditions. In white-collar crime, offenders benefit from institutional power which increases the chance that harmful conduct perpetrated within institutional roles will be responded to with less punitiveness than conventional offenses. It is for this reason that scholars argue white-collar crime poses a substantial threat (Braithwaite, 1982).

Adolescents and Crime

Adolescence is a profoundly unique stage within human development; a time when an individual seeks to construct an identity capable of coping with the demands of adult life. During such a process, unique and aberrant behaviors evolve. Inadvertently, during adolescence, every individual violates social norms and codes of conduct. Furthermore, the reasoning underlying these actions stem from an immature and confounded perspective. It is these idiosyncratic patterns of youth that bring unique implications for social control.

The term "juvenile delinquent" has been used to demarcate youth whose conduct fails to conform to norms professed by institutions such as family and school (Eldefonso & Coffey, 1981). Of particular importance to juvenile delinquency is the maturity of the individual. Adolescents, it is argued, do not have the life experience, the coping skills nor the cognitive abilities to effectively self-regulate.

The legal terminology for criminal intent is *mens rea.*, literally, "evil mind" or "guilty mind." Although a youth may commit certain acts of criminality, the question of intentions

is critical. Because it is believed that adolescents lack *mens rea*, they are given special legal status and treated differently from adults.

The Canadian Young Offenders Act delineates the nature and extent of dealing with the crimes of youth. Essentially, adolescents receive unique treatment in two respects. First, because the concept of *mens rea* is so vital to deciding the retribution of an act, adolescents are given sentences that are different both quantitatively and qualitatively from adults. With the exception of the serious forms of murder, the maximum sentence a youth can receive is three years (Young Offenders Act, 1993). (At the present moment, legislation is making amendments to the Act which would increase a maximum sentence to 10 years). Furthermore, most youth do not serve their time incarcerated, but are typically required to pay retribution through service to the community. Second, a much greater emphasis is place on rehabilitation (Young Offenders Act, 1993). Because youth are believed to be morally, they are given more opportunities to receive professional help in the form of psychotherapy, vocational counseling and education.

Juvenile delinquency is a broad specialty within criminology. Its legal definition defines delinquency as "behavior against the criminal code committed by an individual who has not reached adulthood, as defined by state or federal law" (Burrows, Hudson & Hornick, 1988, p. 5). In Canada, under the Young Offenders Act, a child under the age of 7 cannot be charged with a crime, and individuals up to age 13 cannot be charged unless evidence establishes the child has sufficient cognitive capacity to "know the nature and consequences of the conduct to and appreciate that it was wrong (Young Offenders Act, 1993). Individuals between the age of 12 and 18 qualify under the Y.O.A. Unlawful acts are generally divided into five major categories (Bartol & Bartol 1989, p. 10-11):

1. those against persons;
2. those against property;
3. drug offenses;
4. offenses against the public order; and

5. status offenses.

The first four categories are comparable to crimes committed by adults; status offenses, however, are unique to juveniles. No sanctions are imposed upon adults who commit these same acts. Examples of status offenses include truancy, the abstention from school without legitimate excuse; violation of town or city-established curfews; running away from home; other loosely defined offenses such as unruliness and unmanageability.

Current Concerns over Juvenile Delinquency

During the 1960's, the political and social expression of the "hippie movement" evoked a malaise among the adult population. More recently, trends in criminality among adolescents have proliferated concerns about youth in society. Many scholars now agree that violence has increasingly become a predominant element of adolescent activity (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostenly, & Pardo, 1992; Marron, 1992; Sebald, 1992; Elkind, 1984). Youth's increased preoccupation with violence has fostered anxiety in parents, educators and public officials. Specifically, it seems that individual episodes of violence are becoming more and more inimical, as illustrated by the following vignettes, both of which took place in 1993.

> Two boys, aged 10 and 11, kidnapped a 2 year-old child from a shopping mall in Preston, England. They took the child to some nearby train tracks where they proceeded to bludgeon him to death with bricks and an iron bar. They also filled up his mouth with rocks, and broke his teeth with physical blows. The child's body was left on the tracks where it was eventually sliced in half by a train.
>
> A 15 year-old boy living with his step family on a farm in Whitecourt, Alberta, shot his step-father as he got out of his car after a grocery trip with the other members of the family. The youth proceeded to shoot his mother and two sisters at point blank range. His reasons for killing his family included that his parents "made him do things he didn't like doing."

Accompanying the voracity of these crimes, another disturbing feature concerning the recent trends in juvenile violence is the ostentatious, yet unremorseful attitude that many delinquents hold toward their crime. For example, a New York teenager explained in a radio interview that he did not worry about getting caught after many break and enter

charges because, "if you're doing wrong, you won't do that much time" (Eldefonso, 1983, p. 37). Other juveniles, who emerge out of troubled histories project an "I don't care about you, I don't care about me" attitude in which punishment means little to them. The combination of these two factors has made adolescent violence an increasingly worrisome issue.

Crime in Canada

In Canada criminal acts are specified in written law under the Criminal Code of Canada and other federal statutes (Canadian Center for Justice Statistics, 1992). According to the Canadian Center for Justice Statistics, violent offenses are those that result in physical injury to a person. They include the various forms of homicide (first and second degree murder, attempted murder, manslaughter and infanticide), robbery, abduction and the various forms of sexual and non-sexual assault. This classification matches earlier presentations of conventional crime outlined by Brown, Esbensen & Geis, (1991).

Trends in Violent Crime

Since 1977 the rate of violent crime has steadily increased in Canada, rising 46% in the last decade. In 1992, police reported 1,122 incidents for every 100,00 people, up from 583 incidents in 1977. This translate into an average increase of 9% per annum. Of all individuals charged under the criminal code, 10% were between 12 and 17. Female youths demonstrated the greatest increase in charges received among adults and youth; a total of 15,742 males and 4291 females were charged with crime in 1992. However, this statistic includes repeat offenders who may have been charged more than once during the year.

From 1986 to 1989, adults, youth have accounted for a disproportionate share of the overall increase in persons charged with violent crimes since 1986. There were higher increases in the number of youths charged (23%) than adults (16%). Alberta and Prince Edward Island registered the highest increases of youth crime from 1986-89. In Alberta,

since 1986, there has been a combined increase of 197% in the 6 predominant crimes of young offenders, sexual assault, assault with a weapon, minor assault, possession of stolen property, failure to appear in court, and offenses against the young offenders act.

Finally, assault not involving a weapon accounted for three-quarters of all assaults, and over one-half of all crimes involving violence. Overall, despite the increases, crimes of violence have remained a constant proportion of all offenses of about 10% per annum over the last three decades. However, violent crimes have shown a greater relative increase than any other type of criminal code offenses in the past decade. Moreover, most violence occurs in private residences between individuals known to each other.

Young Offenders

The number of young persons charged under the Young Offenders Act have increased sharply since its implementation in 1984. Young females charged in connection with violent offenses increased by almost 90% between 1983 and 1985, and 90% between the 1985 and 1989 . Young males demonstrated similar patterns, increasing by 68% between 1983 and 1985 and by 75% between 1985 and 1989. The majority of suspects were charged in connection with assault (60%). Young males were more likely to be charged with sexual assault and robbery.

Homicide now stands as the second leading cause of mortality among adolescents across all ethnic groups and ages in the United States (Hammond and Yung, 1993). In addition, homicide is the leading cause of death for African American men between 15-34, and 60% of these homicides involve a firearm.

Location of Violence

Of importance to the rising statistics of violent crime is location. During the course of 1992, 19% of violent incidents involving youths took place in school. That year, 24% of minor assaults, 15% of sexual assaults, and 10% of robberies took place in schools.

Between 1987 and 1990, Ontario schools reported an increase of 150% in major assault incidents. Minor incidents increased by 50% (Roher. 1983).

The National School Safety Center in America estimates that the annual cost of school crime including vandalism runs from approximately 50 million to 600 millions dollars, averaging at 200 million per year in the last 5 decades (Hranitz & Eddowes, 1990). Another report by the National Association of School Security Directors estimated that each year 9,000 rapes, 12,000 armed robberies, and 204,000 aggravated assaults take place in schools. Moreover, an estimated 70,000 serious physical assaults are made on teachers each year. As a result, billions of dollars have been allotted for compensation of assaulted teachers (Martin, 1992). The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey reported that 1 in 5 students carried of weapon during the previous 30 days, with 1 in 20 admitting they had a gun in their possession (Hammond & Yung, 1993). In addition, a national health survey (American School Health Association, 1988) indicated that 23% of boys carried a knife to school. Hranitz and Eddowes estimate that yearly replacement costs due to youth crime is about 200 million dollars (1990, p.4).

Interpretation of Statistics

One must be cautious interpreting crime statistics. First, these findings represent reported crime in which police were involved, many acts of violence are not brought to police attention . Therefore, these statistics underestimate the amount of violence. Second, recent increases in reported crime may be partly due to a heightened public awareness and reduced tolerance of violence. Thus increases may be proliferated because of this trend. Third, the stigma associated with being victimized may be less pronounced today than previously, hence individuals may be more inclined to report violence and to seek help. Therefore, it is difficult to state with a high level of certainty what these statistics are predicting. It is possible the statistical increases in violence within the last decade are measuring society's greater openness to reporting crime. However, the consensus of most

scholars, criminologists and statisticians is that crime, especially violent crime, is on the rise in our society.

Causes of Violence

These statistics rekindle our original interest in the etiology of violent behavior and highlights the importance of formulating a theory able to propose specific causes of delinquent behavior. The purpose of such a theory is threefold: to help organize known data concerning violence; to assist in setting directions for further exploration and research; and, to aid in planning intervention programs oriented toward preventing violent behavior.

Constructing an adequate theory of violence is difficult for several reasons. First, violence is not a diagnostic category or a unitary symptom, but a socially defined phenomenon tied to cultural values. It is dependent upon interpretation of behavior patterns by the agencies responsible for the regulation of social interaction. Certain communities may have a lower tolerance for violence, resulting in the labeling of certain behaviors as violent which, in another community, would not be considered violent.

Second, with the accumulation of scientific research within the past 50 years, scholars have found that many factors related to the etiology of violence. The continuum of hypotheses to account for these relationships range from hereditary to distinctly sociological. For example, Hill (1952) investigated the relationship between the health of a pregnant mother and conduct disorders of children and adults in later life. He found a positive correlation between the two. In contrast, Robert Merton (1938) argued that the governing social structure played a primary role in shaping individual behavior. He believed that most violence and most antisocial behavior was a reaction of the lower classes against the unequal distribution of wealth in society.

Therefore, despite the difficulties involved in formulating a theory of violence, current literature has divided research into three broad categories: biological, psychological and sociological (Jacks & Cox, 1984). Each category emphasizes unique antecedents to violent

behavior. (It should be emphasized that an in-depth analysis of each category could encompass volumes of research, and as such, is beyond the scope of this thesis). The purpose in presenting a brief overview of each theoretical model is to provide the reader with research findings.

Biological Theories of Violence

A premise to biological theories of violence is that genetic, anatomical or physiological deviation predisposes an individual to aberrant in behavioral patterns. Therefore, at any stage of development, an individual may encounter genetic and/or environmental forces which alter his biological make-up and predispose behavioral changes.

Neurological disorders, biochemical abnormalities and temperamental factors are implicated in the early development of conduct disorders (Landy & Peters, 1992). Moreover, changes in prenatal and perinatal practices have made consideration of these factors increasingly important. For instance, fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal crack syndrome are currently the leading causes of mental retardation among children in most urban communities in North America (NAIAA, 1991). Individuals with either syndrome have difficulty with attention, concentration, restlessness and impassivity. These features impede the development of appropriate social interaction, and are positively correlated with conduct disorders in children and adolescents (Barkley, 1987).

Other physical anomalies implicated with aggressive and violent behavior patterns include prenatal and delivery complications; a high incidence of EEG abnormalities (Harris, 1978); evidence of neurological impairment involving seizures and memory distortions (Brennan, Mednick, & Kandel, 1991; Nachson & Denno, 1987); other soft neurological signs (Behar & Stewart, 1982); and a maturational lag in the CNS (Monroe, 1974)

Below average IQ, learning disabilities, and poor academic achievement are also correlated with antisocial behavior (Lipsitt, Buka & Lipsitt, 1990; Patterson et. al, 1990), although this position has come under scrutiny, with some scholars rejecting IQ as an

important variable in delinquent behavior (Menard & Morse, 1984). Many delinquents have difficulty with abstract reasoning, concept formation and problem solving (Berman & Siegal, 1976). Difficulties with attention and concentration within the classroom are also more prevalent among individuals displaying violent tendencies (Shinn, Ramsey, Walker, O'Neill, & Steiber, 1987). Mental retardation and consequent poor school performance is also associated with delinquent behavior (Elliot & Voss, 1974).

Other biological explanations for criminal behavior include premenstrual syndrome, chromosomal abnormalities such as XYY syndrome (Ellis, 1982), and dietary measures. Kuchi (1987) has claimed that sugarless diets diminish the incidents of aggressive behavior among incarcerated youth. His research led individuals to make the historic "Twinkie Defense" in which they claimed that heightened levels of sugar created a chemical imbalance, leading to sugar-induced violence. Support for this theory has not been persuasive according to Morris (1985, p.280).

Finally, substance abuse is positively correlated with criminal activity and violent behavior (Pagliaro & Pagliaro, 1986). Research has consistently implicated alcohol with violent crimes, such as murder, rape and assault; cocaine and heroin have also been implicated with violent crime (Pagliaro & Pagliaro, 1993).

Psychological Theories of Violence

Psychological explanations of crime focus on personality characteristics, while psychoanalytic perspectives assume that inadequate socialization is the source of pathological behavior.

Many research studies have investigated personality traits more common to criminals than the general population. Early studies of personality found the following characteristics to be more common among delinquents: sadism and lack of compassion, emotional immaturity, hyperactivity and insensitivity to others. More recent results, from personality inventories such as the MMPI, uncovered a positive correlation between criminal behavior

and three personality characteristics, psychopathic deviance, schizophrenia and hypomania (Megargee and Bohn, 1979).

Other explanations of deviant behavior have surfaced as a result of hypotheses grounded in personality theories. Freud postulated a destructive force driving human nature was thanatos, the death instinct. He believed this instinct impelled the organism toward aggression, self-destruction and death (Feshback, 1974). Aichorn (1951), an influential psychoanalytic theorist, suggested that criminals have underdeveloped superegos which do not adequately control the instinctual forces of the id, leading to them to commit criminal acts without remorse. He believed that an immature superego resulted from the failure to form loving relationships with their parents.

John Bowlby (1958) argued that affectionless interaction between mother and child during infancy has strong implications for adolescent delinquent behavior. The frustration-aggression hypothesis, formulated by Dollard & Miller (1939), came from a learning model which held that aggression is a consequence of the organism's exposure to experiences which block goal-directed behavior. Antecedent causes were presumed to play an important role in the stimulation of aggressive behavior. Social learning theorists, Bandura and Walters (1959), postulated aggressive and violent behavior was a result of reinforcement of the behavior after it occurred (Cowan & Walters, 1963; Bandura & Walters, 1959), or a consequence of processes such as role-modeling and identification with a model in the acquisition of a response (Bandura, 1962).

Sociological Theories of Violence

Sociological theories of violence are subdivided into familial and sociocultural typologies. Since the family is the smallest social unit within society, analysis within this frame of reference focuses on family dynamics and relationships which foster behavioral patterns. In contrast, other scholars emphasize that the larger social structure plays a pivotal role in the etiology of aggressive and violent behavior.

Parental characteristics are associated with violent tendencies in children. For instance, a father's antisocial personality has been found to be a critical variable in adolescent violence, and the impact is even stronger if he is violent (Stewart & DuBlois, 1983); or alcoholic (Morris, Escoll, & Wexler, 1956). Similarly, maternal psychopathology (especially depression) is correlated with violent behavior in adolescents (Cicchetti & Aber, 1986; Lahey, Russo, Walker & Piancentini, 1989).

Other factors correlated with higher levels of aggression and violence include the security of attachment between parent and child (Erickson, Sroufe, & Egeland, 1985); severe parental punitiveness Pelcovitz (1984), Patterson (1984), and Eisen (1976); parental leniency Siegel & Kohn (1959), Tobias (1977); lack of affection, nurturance and love deprivation (Bates & Bayles, 1988; Campbell, 1985); parental rejection (Loeber & Stouthamer-Louber, 1986) and a dysfunctional family system (Harbin, 1983, 1977; Madden, 1983); divorce (Kalter, 1987); and single-parent families without a father figure (Gelles, 1989; Pillay, 1987; Livingston, 1986). In summary, since family members have the most intense and consistent contact with children, family characteristics, relational patterns and child-rearing practices are highly implicated with delinquent conduct (Baumrind, 1989).

Sociocultural explanations are further divided into social structure, social process and social reactions theories. Social structure theories contend that an imbalance in class structure creates a disparity in opportunities and resources. As a result lower stratum citizens are more prone to criminal and violent behavior. Structural theory has been largely supplanted with social process and social reaction theories.

Social process theories argue that the interaction with more immediate groups, such as family and peers, push or pull individuals toward lawbreaking. Interactions with these reference groups are key to criminal behavior. Advocates of this position include Edwin Sutherland (1939), Thorsten Sellin (1938) and Matsueda & Heimer (1987).

Finally social reaction theories do not attempt to explain causes of crime in terms of the individual. They view the individual as a largely passive being engineered into criminal behavior by societal definitions or by the reactions of others. These theorists maintain that official reactions to legal violations label people "criminals," ensnaring them into a deviant identity. However, as widely endorsed as this theory was during the 1960's and 1970's, it has been battered by recent research and has lost much of its theoretical prowess.

Summary

This chapter has focused on the concept of violence, defining it as actions with aggressive intent which incur harm. Crime statistics indicate that violent offenses has risen dramatically in the past decade, especially among youth. Furthermore, youth crime and vandalism has led to exorbitant costs both economically and socially. Finally, various theories depicting the etiology of violence were presented.

The purpose of this thesis is to focus on the pervasive trend toward increasing violence among adolescents in present day society. It is one premise of this thesis that violence, is increasing and that individuals are more likely than in past decades to resolve differences through violent means. Specific biological antecedents are undeniably involved in some forms of violent crime. Moreover, personality disorders and psychosis are related to the proliferation of crime. But the central question this thesis seeks to explore is the role that identity plays in violent behavior.

Control of teen violence is also central to this investigation. Parents and teachers appear to be at a loss when it comes to controlling the violent expressions of youth. A recent article in the Edmonton Journal (1994) posed the question, "Why are we afraid of our children?" Such concerns are indicative of a larger social trend.

Therefore, in discussing youth violence, the behavioral definition (violence as intentional aggression) is preferred. The emphasis is not upon specific crimes of violence, but on the general trend toward increased violence. The purpose of relating identity with

violence is to investigate possible links between these two concepts. It is not to deny other explanations of violent behavior, rather to help discern what part it plays in the evolution and the control of violence.

CHAPTER 4

Rights and Responsibilities

The purposes of this chapter are: (a) to identify and examine society's emphasis upon rights and responsibilities (b) to discuss post-modern conditions that have influenced the manner in which people view rights and responsibilities and (c) to discuss the implications the above factors hold for the adolescent identity project.

Introduction

Every night, nearly half of the world goes to bed hungry. The majority of people worldwide must fight for survival on a daily basis. Recent estimates show that an average daily wage for a working man in Romania is sufficient to buy one chicken (Time, 1993). Contrast this with working North Americans who enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. The North American free enterprise system, the natural wealth of the land combined with the entrepreneurial spirit of the people, has delivered a flood of goods to the consumer at a relatively low cost. Moreover, the U.S. has passed more social legislation and enacted more laws that enhance individual freedoms than any other nation in the world. Canada, too, enjoys an abundance of freedoms and economic prosperity, recently being judged by the United Nations as the best country to live in the world.

Despite these positive attributes, many individuals are concerned with the present state of North American society. A national survey in 1984 revealed that a majority of Americans were fearful about the future of their country (Oskamp, 1984). Disquietude revolves around the deterioration of private and public morality, the breakdown of the nuclear family, soaring crime rates and corruption in the government. Marital break-up, substance abuse, suicide and crime have reached high levels despite billions of dollars allocated annually to social programs and education. Some scholars point out that the erosion of society has come during an age when individual freedoms are maximized. At no other time in history have such an abundance of possibilities been so readily available to the

individual; these potentials ranging from a consumer market abounding with material possessions, to greater educational and career advancement. Paradoxically, in the wake of such freedoms, our society has never been so aware of social deterioration.

Scholars have postulated many hypotheses to account for our society's malaise, yet three topics have received particular attention. These include exaggerated individualism, a decline in family values, and an augmented demand for personal rights with a corresponding weak sense of responsibility to the local and national community. Each of these have direct implications for personal identity.

Individualism

The self as masterful, autonomous and intrinsically motivated have slowly emerged as central concepts in Western History. Scholars hypothesize that this conception of self has particularly grown in a reaction to the repressive propriety associated with the Victorian era. The prevailing ideology of that time emphasized an instinct-driven, violent self. In this context, people were impelled to confine their aggressive and sexual impulses. The repressive propriety associated with that era demanded conservative attitudes and restriction of hedonistic proclivity. Lears (1983) argues that North Americans have emerged from this stinted shell to become obsessed with self-indulgent appetites. In addition, with the rise of science, conceptions of self emphasized reason and rationality. Cushman (1990) claims that these changes, compounded by industrialization, consumerism and technology, served to increasingly isolate the self from its embeddedness in community in tradition. Cushman explains:

> By this [the empty self] I mean that our terrain has shaped a self that experiences a significant absence of community, tradition, and shared meaning. It experiences these social absences and their consequences "interiorly" as a lack of personal conviction and worth, and it embodies the absences as a chronic, undifferentiated hunger. The post-World War II self thus yearns to acquire and

consume as an unconscious way of compensating for what has been lost: It is empty (p.600).

Other commentators reflect similar sentiments concerning the emptiness of our individualistic cultural mandate. For instance, Lasch (1978, 1984) described our social milieu as the "culture of narcissism" which produces individuals in terms of "minimal selves;" Bell (1976) describes the prevalence of hedonism in modern society; Bloom (1987) discusses the intellectual crisis in America; and Bellah (1985) deplores the emptiness of individualism.

The Family

Some scholars have lamented the diminishment of "family values" in the past decades. In the 1950's, the commitment to family was best symbolized by women who stayed at home to raise their children. Family came before self, "selfishness" brought disapproval from the community. Now, the reverse seems true. Individual embellishment, self-actualization, assertiveness and spiritual transcendence, have subordinated social commitments to individual interests. However, it is not only women who have shuffled their personal and familial priorities; society in general seems to have affirmed individual happiness above familial cohesion. Christopher Lasch (1984) and Robert Bellah (1985), argue that this transition stems from a consumer oriented society that implores the absolutism of free choice. This freedom implies an inalienable right to select any option conducive to advancing one's self interests. Therefore, if marriage or family ties impede personal goals, they are subject to cancellation. Lack of commitment is the ingredient some authors identify as leading to a diminishment in family responsibility. Other post-modern transitions in the family will be described later in this chapter.

Rights and Responsibilities

The current emphasis upon individual rights and a diminishment of social responsibility is reinforced by a documentary aired by CBC television that commemorated the 50th anniversary of D-Day. One portion of the documentary featured a class of graduating high school students who were asked to comment on the significance of the event, and many declared their admiration for the soldiers who took part in the invasion. They also expressed their gratitude for the freedom and opportunities Canada possesses as a result of the liberating effort made by the those who fought in World War II. Yet when the reporter asked whether the students would be willing to serve their country in a similar manner, many responded that they would not. Several alluded to their present concern of finishing an education to obtain a job and steady income. In a similar vein, a recent survey in the United States revealed that youth expected to be tried before a jury of their peers, yet they were reluctant to serve on one themselves (Janowitz, 1983).

These examples suggest a paradox within our culture's belief in individual rights: an unwillingness to assume the responsibility required for maintaining social order. It is evident that individuals expect government services. Recent protests in Alberta over government cutbacks demonstrate people's outrage at a loss of such services. It also appears that people believe they are owed rights simply because they are "members" of the local or national community. Yet the criteria of responsible citizenship that carries with it duties and obligations for upholding society, has become obscured. A study by People for the American Way (1989) notes:

> Young people have learned only half of America's story. Consistent with the priority they place on personal happiness, young people reveal notions of America's unique character that emphasizes freedom and license almost to the complete exclusion of service or participation. Although they clearly appreciate the democratic freedoms that, in their view, make theirs the "best country in the

world to live in," they fail to perceive a need to reciprocate by exercising the duties and responsibilities of good citizenship (p.27).

Such imbalance has implications for adolescents' development of personal identity.

The Spirit of Community

An investigation into rights and responsibilities in society highlights the government as playing a central role in granting public rights and enforcing social responsibility. Amitai Etzioni's work, *The Spirit of Community*, (1993) provides an analysis of rights and responsibilities in American society. He is a former White House adviser, and currently resides as a professor of Philosophy at George Washington University and an expert on social policy, and the founding editor of the Communitarian Quarterly.

Etzioni advocates communitarianism as an environmental movement dedicated to the betterment of moral, social and political environment. This movement, he claims, is growing in popularity as a result of the mounting discontent with the emptiness of individualism so prevalent in the 1980's. Communitarianism offers a reconstruction of moral values through emphasizing social cohesion and community spirit. Etzioni charges that a resurgence of community living will catalyze the re-affirmation of social virtues and re-kindle family values. In sum, the spirit of community provides a blue-print for the remodeling of American society which includes a renewed emphasis upon social responsibility and defining the proper place of individual rights in the social order.

The Imbalance of Rights

Etzioni argues that the imbalance between personal rights and social responsibilities has existed for a long time. In fact, he contends that it is a basic trait of American society. However, the problem does not lie solely in the hands of the American public. Etzioni points to trends in political leadership which have accommodated to this pattern of thinking. He states (p.4):

> American leaders have exacerbated this tendency [the imbalance between rights and responsibilities] in recent years. In 1961 President John. F. Kennedy could still stir the nation when he states: "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." But Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, backed by some Democrats in Congress, proposed a much less onerous course: they suggested that ever-increasing economic growth would pay for government services, and taxpayers would be expected to shell out less - implying that Americans could have their cake and eat it too.

The tendency to claim personal rights and leave responsibility to the government permeates social life. Etzioni cites examples in public education, in crime prevention, and in government funding of special interest groups. He points to the paradox in the attitudes of many Americans who believe that national security and defense are primary responsibilities of the government in spite of the fact that they are unwilling to enlist their services, or encourage their children to do the same.

In a similar vein, other scholars, such as Friedman (1990) and Mead (1986) have examined the attitude of entitlement (the belief that a person is owed services and freedoms without obligation) among the American public who receive social welfare or unemployment. This population claims the right to receive financial aid and demands that the government provide them with jobs and living necessities. Yet few are willing to take the necessary steps required to integrate into the work force. Friedman and Mead claim that the problem with social policy which governs this segment of society is that individuals who receive government benefits lack obligations. Rather, they receive financial and emotional assistance, but are not educated to the requirements of membership within society. Mead (1986, p.49) explains:

> A better explanation is that the [social] programs failed to overcome poverty because they largely ignored behavioral problems among the poor. In particular, they did not tell their clients with any authority that they ought to behave

differently. New benefits and services were given to the disadvantaged, but virtually no standards were set for how they should function in return.

The absence of clearly demarcated social responsibilities has therefore contributed to entitlement. In the eyes of Etzioni, Mead and Friedman, present day North American society spends too much time and money trying to satisfy the demands of individual rights without sufficiently promoting personal obligation and social responsibility.

Problems with Emphasizing Rights

Etzioni emphasizes four problems associated with the emphasis on rights evident in contemporary society. These include: an increase of conflict between people; a degradation of essential social virtues; interpreting rights as intrinsically "ours;" and creating dependence as opposed to independence.

When someone claims a right, he (she) does not act in isolation. The proverbial saying, "no man is an island unto himself," holds true. A right granted to an individual will affect others for the following reason: the entitlement of a right demands that others respect the expression of that right. As pervasive granting of rights continues, it becomes increasingly difficult to act without violating another's rights. Discourse becomes impoverished and confrontational leading to an escalation of interpersonal conflict over maintaining one's rights. This is effectively illustrated by smoking legislation that has been a source of debate for decades. Originally, smokers had freedom to smoke in any public location. Although smoking manufacturers were forced to label cigarette containers with danger warnings, individuals were free to engage in this activity; it was their right. However, during the 1980's, non-smokers lobbied against the freedoms of smokers, claiming that their right to function in a smoke-free environment was being violated. Court battles were fought, and heated conflicts ensued between opposing parties. Recently, non-smokers have won claim to a smoke-free workplace. Numerous other examples occur daily in society, from parents fighting for their child's right to receive specialized schooling

to debates over moral issues, such as abortion. With such an emphasis on individual rights, conflict appears to abound. Etzioni notes "the expression of more rights makes it difficult to achieve compromises and reach consensus, processes that lie at the heart of a democracy" (p.6).

Second, Etzioni argues that emphasis on rights generates demand for more personal rights. For instance, a majority of Americans (81%) now consider health-care to be a right as opposed to a privilege (Roper reports, 1993); the president of the U.S. Student Association claims that higher education a right and not a privilege (USA Today, 1991); death-row inmates at San Quentin have sued to protect their reproductive "rights" through artificial insemination (Fortune, 1992); a Los Angeles lawyer who is fighting to protect beaches in that city has advanced the notion that sand has rights (Shore and Beach, 1988)!

Etzioni likens the issuance of new rights to the wholesale printing of currency. This process, he argues, "causes a massive inflation of rights that devalues their moral claims" (p. 5). In this context, the boundary between fundamental social rights and less important ones becomes obscured. In advocating for numbers of personal rights, the character and importance of a given right is overshadowed. This potentially degrades moralistic social virtues and robs them of their fortitude and importance. In turn, they are matched with other subordinate rights, and propriety is judged to be a matter of preference. For example, persons who defend violent pornography state that it is a form of free speech, period. They argue that they are entitled to this right and retort that those who do not wish to look at such material are not forced to do so. However, such a position disregards those who are hurt by this "freedom." In spite of the conflict which a greater emphasis upon rights creates, it parallels the rise of individualism in North America today.

Third, rights have been internalized to the point of becoming a personal possession, something viewed as intrinsically "ours." When perceived to exist under our control, rights are wielded as we direct. The focus lies solely upon maintaining the freedom of

exercising personal rights. This position disregards a quintessential axiom of rights: they are limited by a responsibility towards others. Etzioni explains (p. 7):

> ...we all know that on one level our liberties are limited by those of others and that we can do what we want, only *as long as we do not harm others*. Rights talk pushes us to disregard this crucial qualification, the concern for one another and for the community. Soon "I can do what I want as long as I do not hurt others" becomes "I can do what I want because I have the right to do it."

Furthermore, such a perspective neglects the burden it imposes upon others. For example, those who endorse the freedom to consume illegal drugs argue that people have a right to do with their lives what they wish, including endangering them. They reason: "its my body, I should be able to do with it what I want." However, such behavior seldom remains isolated. Substance abuse is positively correlated with multiple health ailments, traffic accidents and crime (Pagliaro & Pagliaro, 1986). As a result, others, (taxpayers in particular) are left to shoulder the financial burden of their actions. In a similar vein, the attitude of some juveniles imply a complete disregard for upholding social duties and obligations. The following comments from a juvenile appeared in the Edmonton Journal (1994) "Right now I'm on a free ride. Maybe one day I'll grow up. But if society's going to lock me up, they better take good care of me."

Finally, individuals who abdicate social responsibilities incur a psychological dependence upon others. Laurence Mead (1986) illuminates this concept in *Beyond Entitlement,* in which he critiques social policies of the U.S. government. Mead notes that despite the succession of programs for the needy, disadvantaged and unemployed in America, poverty, crime and joblessness continue to increase. He argues that the problem is social programs which expect little or nothing from its recipients in return for entitlement. "The fatal weakness is that they [government services] award benefits as entitlement and expect nothing from beneficiaries" (p.2). Mead also notes that people who receive "something for nothing" often view privileges as rights (for instance, receiving social

welfare becomes an expected service). Essentially, these individuals become conditioned to receiving financial support in the absence of sustained effort. Reinforcement of lackluster behavior with continued financial and social support serves to strengthen the pattern of dependence. From this position they lack motivation to pursue skills needed to function in society, which further exacerbates their reliance upon governmental resources. Essentially, this promotes characteristics antithetical to those of a civic society (where the people are defined as competent, responsible and able to fulfill expectations within that society). If society is to balance civil rights with social responsibilities, then this state of dependence must be challenged. Mead explains (p. 257):

> Somehow the rhetoric of equal rights that dominates federal politics must be turned around to justify equal obligations as well. Today, the poor, dependent, and non-white must demand equal obligations from government the way they once demanded equal rights. Equality demands that they take back the duties to work, get through school, contribute to families, and so forth that programs have assumed on their behalf. For given the evenhanded nature of citizenship, only those who bear obligations can truly appropriate their rights.

The psychology of entitlement has therefore become a predominant attitude within our social milieu. Moreover, it has worked its way into the subculture of adolescents who now demand more from society while contributing less than at previous times in history.

Defining Rights and Responsibilities

Rights, as defined by the Oxford dictionary, is a power or privilege belonging to an individual as defined by law. In the context of membership to society, there are three types of rights endowed to individuals. First, civil rights - those outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights - encompass the rights which allow an individual to operate as an independent unit in society. Examples include the right to own a business, freedom of speech, freedom or religion, and so forth. Second, political rights are those which allow any person to vote

or hold office. Finally, social rights outline an individual's status within the social structure, and include notions such as the right to a minimum standard of living. These rights are continually being formulated and contested in present day society (Marshal, 1964). In this discussion civic and social rights are the focus.

Responsibilities are more easily defined in terms of what one should not do as opposed to what one should do. Criminal law outlines codes of conduct not tolerated by the social structure. An individual's social responsibility is upheld when they do not engage in such behaviors, or when they concede to retribution for violation of those codes. For example, tax evasion is a crime; thus one's social responsibility is to pay taxes. Furthermore, members are expected to uphold and promote the general values of society (although these are taught much more indirectly). For example, honoring a commitment is valued in our society, and it is expected that parents will instill this behavior in their children.

Many core values advanced by society imply a concern for others. For instance, Mary Ann Glendon (1991) describes an interconnectedness of rights and responsibilities that is found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states "everyone has duties to the communities; everyone's rights and freedoms are subject to limitations for the purposes of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and general welfare (p.77). Thus, Glendon argues that social responsibilities are linked to the values of society.

Rights Presume Responsibilities

Etzioni notes the inclination of some individuals to view rights as absolute freedoms; that is, the provision of a right is equated with the unrestrained expression of that right. This, he argues, is illogical and unethical.

> There is a perhaps inevitable but nonetheless distressing tendency to equate the existence of a right with the nonexistence of a responsibility. That is to say, if

> one has a right to so something, it is assumed to be proper and perhaps even good that he do it. *However, rights do not automatically make for rightness.*" (p.201).

Etzioni argues that the trend towards an increasing sense of entitlement among North Americans is based on a faulty understanding of the fundamental principles of social life. For instance, at the turn of the century, Emile Durkheim highlighted the importance of freedom of speech in society. He believed that scientific investigation could determine the ends of what society should be, as well as the means of achieving those ends. The catalyst which facilitated this process was the liberty to express one's views which Durkheim argued promoted creativity and diversity. This, in turn, led to a clash of opposing opinions which facilitated critical thought. The end product was a higher level of sociological ideology.

Etzioni charges that society has misapplied Durkheim's dictum; individuals have taken freedom of speech to imply absolute freedom. The fact that one has a legal right to state what one wishes does not make it ethically appropriate to say whatever comes to mind. Respect for others is concomitant with exercising one's right. Despite the importance of freedom of speech in a democratic society, it is not intended for the expression of derogatory slogans or hateful literature. Rather, responsibility is inferred with its use. William Galston (1991) provides a fitting commentary:

> The language of rights is morally incomplete. To say that "I have a right to do x" is not to conclude that "x is the right thing for me to do." ...Rights gives reasons to others not to interfere coercively with me in the performance of the protected acts; however, they do not in themselves give me sufficient reason to perform these acts. There is a gap between rights and rightness that cannot be closed without a richer moral vocabulary - one that invokes principles of decency, duty, responsibility, and the common good, among others (p.8).

Therefore, Etzioni believes that what is most needed in American society is a "shoring up of moral foundations" of which the maintenance of social responsibility is a key element.

Adolescents and Entitlement

Adolescents are no exception to our society's fascination with entitlement. Youth may even be more prone than adults to dwell upon receiving special treatment, or to make excuses for failing to live up to duties and obligations. Moreover, in the current social milieu, it appears that adolescents have learned to exercise their rights without an appreciation of the responsibilities with those rights. Mitchell (1992, p.143) notes "the language of rights appears on the tongues of adolescents much more than the language of responsibility." A teacher's experience illustrates this point. He states:

> On the last day of classes, several students got carried away in their celebration of the end of school. They began putting shaving cream in other students' hair and faces, and in the commotion that ensued, some of these kids were getting hurt. Several teachers, including myself, came to stop the fighting. As I placed one hand on one of the disruptive student's shoulder, he immediately screamed at me, "Don't touch me, I'll sue you for assault!" Kids know they have power, and know they can use it. I'm left pretty helpless as an educator trying to enforce a bit of discipline.

Essentially, these patterns in youth can be traced to two aspects of adolescent life. The first is the pervasiveness of egocentric thinking ; the second involves features of post-modern society that have negatively influenced adolescent's perception of social responsibility.

Adolescent Egocentrism;

As an individual matures from childhood to adulthood, cognitive powers change. Jean Piaget advanced many meaningful concepts related to cognitive development in children, and ideas provide a foundation for discussing the progression of egocentrism during adolescence. In addition, David Elkind has expanded upon Piagetian concepts of egocentrism and contributed useful concepts related to the adolescent thought process. It is to the work of these scholars that I now refer.

Piaget describes cognitive development as occurring in progressive stages. He believed that in the course of normal development, the thought process moves from a completely egocentric point of view to an objective, sociocentric perspective. In order to reach a mature cognitive status, the individual must grow beyond the constraining influences of egocentrism. Mature, sociocentric thought cannot occur until one is released from the narrowness of egocentrism. Thus, a holistic understanding of one's social responsibilities and civil rights requires the shedding of egocentric thinking.

Essentially, egocentrism refers to an embeddedness in one's point of view; an incomplete differentiation of one's self from the outside world; and the tendency to interpret the world in terms of self (Mitchell, 1992). From this framework, an individual considers his own subjective point of view as representing objective reality. He believes others see things the way he does, and is largely unaware of the different perspectives of those around him. Furthermore, the individual immersed in such egocentrism is unaware of his own bias. Thus the child reduces all experiences to his point of view and distorts them without realizing it because he is ignorant of his own subjectivity.

As cognitive development progresses through the stages identified by Piaget, the nature, quality, and characteristics of egocentrism change. Formal operations brings sophisticated cognitive structures including the ability to think abstractly, a more comprehensive analysis of problems, propositional thinking, a future orientation, and analysis of one's own thinking. These features further complicate the thought process and bring about a higher-level of egocentrism (Elkind, 1967). In this sense, egocentrism can be said to be a necessary by-product of cognitive development which creates at each stage a new set of unrealistic representations of the world.

Mitchell (1992) outlines several features of the egocentric thinking typical of adolescents. First, he describes cognitive distortion, the tendency of adolescents to behave as though they can "read" the thoughts of others. From this egocentric pose the individual is convinced he understands exactly what another is thinking; he believes he is all-

knowing, able to discern the most appropriate course of a given circumstance. Moreover, he expects that others should submit to his line of thinking because of his inherent "rightness." Piaget (1967, p.63) notes, "Adolescent egocentricity is manifested by a belief in the omnipotence of reflection, as though the world should submit itself to idealistic schemes rather than to systems of reality." Therefore, from this lofty position, the adolescent is likely to twist to his own ends the concepts of rights and responsibilities.

Second, Mitchell describes what Elkind labels "assumptive realities." In childhood, an individual may accept a hypothesis, even when it is not supported by available data. Adolescents, as a result of formal operations, are more able to face evidence and rework their beliefs to fit the evidence. However, some ideas become so ingrained in an individual's mind that he or she believes they "fit" reality when they do not. In this brand of egocentrism, the adolescent rigidly clings to certain beliefs and remain convinced of their truth despite contradictory evidence. Elkind claims that assumptive realities differ from delusions in that "assumptive realities derive, at least originally from new cognitive abilities and lack the systematization and narcissism of true delusions (Elkind, 1974).

Assumptive realities contribute to self-destructive or counter-productive behavior. Examples include a teenager's belief that sexual intercourse will not result in pregnancy even though for others it frequently does; or that speeding will not result in a car accident even though it may happen to others. Parents are often perplexed at their child's refusal to accept responsibility for failure. For instance, an adolescent may deny that his or her circle of friends were responsible for creating too much noise at a party. They claim that the person who complained about the noise is "too sensitive,' or 'picky," and it was this characteristic, not the noise which the teens created, that was the problem.

Third, Mitchell notes that an integral part of our identity stems from our understanding of how we live our lives, meet challenges or live up to expectations. This constitutes the "court record" of our personal lives, something like a mental manuscript. He claims that adolescents, more than children or adults, edit their personal court records in flattering

ways. The end product is "often a fictionalized version of past achievements, and a romanticized version of present accomplishments" (p. 38).

Adolescent egocentrism subordinates facts to desires. Feelings, which are particularly overpowering during the teenage years, subjugate reason. Mitchell labels this as "affective logic." In contrast with inductive or deductive logic which operates on reasoning, affective logic is a "sequence of judgments in which the connection between one judgment and another is emotional" (Mitchell, in print). For example, "Mr. Smith gave me an F in Math, he hates me." Essentially, affective logic persuades by style rather than substance, using emotion instead of sound logic to convince. Therefore, if adolescents feel strongly about something, they are likely to disregard logic; even to the point of becoming emotionally labile. Youths are likely to cite other factors as playing a causal role to a problematic outcome instead of their own behavior. In sum, these features make it difficult for the adolescent to accept responsibility.

Egocentrism inflames entitlement thinking. It enhances the belief that one is owed certain privileges, or are deserving of what others have, which corroborates their claim to such benefits. In a conversation with a young offender, during which I asked the individual why he had committed crime (this individual was charged with two accounts of assault and several break and enters), revealed the following:

> I was just standing up for myself. Social services won't give me any money, so I had to do something. I had to get money somehow. Its not really fair that others should get more than I do. Its a free country, you know. I have a right to live too. So I did what I had to.

In sum, adolescents must grapple with the pull of egocentrism in daily life. As evidenced with cognitive distortion, assumptive reality, social distortion and affective logic, they are inclined to maintain a narrow, rigid and self-centered perspective. They usually lack insight to their own biases. Therefore, without guidance and instruction the adolescents' reaction to social obligations and civil duties is often guided by self-serving

egocentrism. They lack the balanced decision-making capacity. It is only towards the late adolescent years that adolescents overcome egocentrism.

Post Modernism

Thus far I have briefly discussed some problematic outcomes associated with an overemphasis on rights and an under emphasis on social responsibility. I have also outlined some features of the adolescent thought process that encourage a sense of entitlement. On a broader level, some scholars contend that certain features of our post-modern society have eroded our sense of balance between rights and responsibilities. As indicated previously, North Americans have experienced extraordinary changes in society within the last century. Concomitant with these social forces, our culture has undergone multiple transitions that have altered the manner in which people interact with each other. Highly esteemed values have been replaced; goals, dreams, and aspirations have changed in focus and intensity. In short, the ideologies, aims and purposes that direct daily life are radically different from what they were several decades ago.

The impact for the post-modern adolescent is equally profound. Not only has the teen population experienced the impact of an industrialized, technologically driven society, they have been assigned new roles in post-modern society. What needs further addressing are the conditions of post-modernism that have significantly impacted adolescents' perception of rights and responsibilities within society. Sebald (1992) provides a brief analysis of selected features of post-modern society pertinent to youth.

Consumerism

Consumerism is one of the defining features of post-modern society. Lasch (1984) defines consumerism as the mass production of goods which are widely marketed to gratify people's needs and wants. Essentially, consumerism has rendered goods and services unheard of in prior generations. From this, there is a tendency to develop an obsession

with owning and consuming. (In recent years, many companies have targeted adolescents as primary groups of marketing strategies because their unique developmental characteristics attract them to certain products.) Sebald claims that postindustrial consumption patterns have generated a sense of entitlement among youth (and others). As a result, many individuals assume that they are entitled to a financially secure, psychologically fulfilled life.

Individualism

Bellah (1985) provides a comprehensive and widely accepted definition of individualism in *Habits of the Heart*. He described two types of individualism: utilitarian and expressive. The former views society as arising from a contract that individuals enter into only in order to advance self-interest. The latter, thought to be the predominant philosophy in post-modern society, holds that each person has a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold or be expressed for individuality to be realized.

Taylor (1991) expands upon the concept of expressive individualism. He charges that the present malaise in society has been exacerbated by this epistemological outlook. The underlying tenet to this philosophy is "to thine own self be true." Importance is placed upon acting in accordance with what one believes to be real. To be human, after all, is to be uniquely human, and our existential purpose is to find and express that uniqueness. Relativism is adopted as an ideological framework. From this perspective, everyone has the freedom to determine what is right for them; conversely, no person has a right to impose values upon someone else. Freedom of choice is good, and anything that impedes this freedom is not.

Like Cushman's "empty self," Taylor holds that individualism ultimately leads to a "fragmented, trivial, isolated self" (p.113). To reject the idea that some aspects of living are healthier than others, and that self-transcendence does not require rejection of false images is to ultimately engage in self-denial and inaunthenticity.

> Unless some options are more significant than others, the very idea of self-choice falls into triviality and hence incoherence. Self-choice as an ideal makes sense only because some issues are more important than others... The agent seeking significance in life, trying to define him- or herself, has to exists in a horizon of important questions (Taylor, p. 39-40).

Thus individualism, despite its surface appeal, lacks personal fulfillment. Moreover, it encourages selfish behavior and diminishes the richness of human experience found in community and family.

Extended Adolescence

Throughout history the period of life defined as adolescence has been shaped by in the social structure. Industrialization played a pivotal role in eliminating the direct transition from childhood roles to adult roles. Further changes in post-industrial life have magnified the adolescent predicament of being shunned from the labor market until a later age. As a result, North American youth remain pre-adult for an extended period of time.

This protracted adolescence and subsequent exclusion from the work force holds several key implications for the growing up process. First, search for a unique identity is delayed until vocational, ideological and romantic commitments can be made. Second, with segregation of adolescents from the work place, youth no longer witness (or participate in) the work of adults. Third, as a result of alienation from the workplace, adolescents feel they are not needed or wanted in society, Finally, youth spend considerable time with peers which catalyzes the formation of collective groups, such as gangs. Although these groups meet many of the social, emotional and psychological needs of youth, they encourage the maintenance of an independent culture, often with ideologies opposed to those of society.

Post-Modern American Culture

Sebald (1992) suggests that American culture provides a number of strong values, although in a spirit distinct from other historical periods. Sebald states that "the very nature of the American ethos stresses individuality and democracy; the burden of deciding on a cause, on life meaning, and on goal aspirations is thereby placed in the hands of the individual" (p.379). Emphasis is placed on self-reliance, independence and goal aspirations. Sebald concedes that these values are more taxing than in more totalitarian regimes that offer ready-made programs and narrow, prescribed identities.

A further characteristic of American culture is anomie. Individuals experience anomie when cultural values and ideals are presented without the understanding of how they are to be attained. For instance, in North America, material success is a cultural goal, yet the rules for attaining it are lacking. Many adolescents, especially those in lower classes, face anomie in post-modern society. Typically, reaction to anomie is apathy, evidenced by the rejection of goals and norms, and gravitating toward a subcultural environment where the norms and values are more easily met by the adolescent.

Sebald claims differences in the family structure have emerged in post-modern society. For instance, significant intergenerational conflict has emerged as a result of cultural and knowledge lags. Parents, unlike their children who are daily exposed to educators, find it difficult to keep up with science and technology. This places the parent in a position in which their authority is undermined. As a result, many parents resort to authoritarian leadership and restrict the activities of their children; many youth rebel from this confinement, leaving conflict at the center of the parent-teen relationship.

Second, the traditionally larger family, which existed prior to the post-modern age, provided a more extensive community for youth, making interaction with peers outside the family less prevalent. Not only did this maintain closer family ties, but facilitated greater familial participation and responsibilities. In post-modern society, a smaller nuclear family has reduced the number of concrete adult role models and family members. Association

with non familial peers is now the norm, and youth are more prone to involvement with independent subcultures which have no direct relationship to the family.

Finally, cultural emphasis on individual freedom has strained family cohesiveness. Individuals are less likely to experience a nurturant, secure foundation in the home environment as parents spend more time pursuing personal interests. Moreover, with increasing rates of marital break-up, family members are more likely to experience interpersonal conflict and stress; they are less likely to live in close association with a "positive" adult role-model; they are less likely to learn constructive, allocentric values and ideologies from adults; and they seemingly are more prone to experiment with substance abuse, sexuality, and violence an early age. In sum, the adolescent has been given most of the responsibility to determine careers, to make important decisions about life direction and to learn about making his way in society.

Rights and Responsibilities in Adolescence;

A case can be made that assuming responsibility during adolescence plays a vital role in challenging egocentric thinking and enhancing the ability to negotiate social duties and obligations. Erikson argued for a moratorium which enables adolescents to experiment with adult roles and to prepare them emotionally and educationally for adult life. In Erikson's psychology engagement in adult responsibilities was paramount to strengthening the ego identity. During the moratorium,

> the child can develop a sense of responsibility where he can gain some simple feeling for institutions, functions and roles which will permit him to anticipate his responsible participation as an adult (Erikson, 1959, p.81).

Erikson believed that participating in positions of responsibility facilitated experimentation with different roles, self-sameness and continuity of the self, and contributed to the identity project.

Similarly, Steinberg and Elmen (1981) suggested that finding a job is a primary means for an adolescent to develop a sense of responsibility. In this context, the individual is educated in the social skills and conduct required for productive involvement in society. Steinberg explains:

> Working experiences are assumed to have a potentially positive impact on the worker by advancing social as well as cognitive development. In the work setting, the adolescent must learn to shift between very diverse roles quickly and effectively. In a certain situation he must act authoritatively, at other times he must behave deferentially, at still other times he is expected to react to people on an egalitarian basis. These experiences enhance the individual's adeptness towards becoming a social responsible member (1981, p.145).

Elkind (1967) postulated that one of the key mechanisms that contributes to the decline of egocentrism is the process of decentering. Essentially, decentering is the change from an egocentric to an allocentric point of view. It enables the shift from a limited aspect of reality to an expanded, multidimensional perspective. The individual decenters by becoming aware that he is not the center of the world and realizing than other persons have an existence of their own, quite independent of how it is perceived or who perceives it (Muuss, 1988). Elkind argues that the decentration is facilitated by social interaction, because unidimentional perceptions are challenged and must be reexamined in the light of ideas expressed by others.

Elkind believed that a salient component of healthy social interaction involves the learning of responsibility. In this capacity, significant others (parents, teachers, or coaches) play a pivotal role in the lives of adolescents through enforcing consequences of behavior, and teaching duties and obligations. He states (1984, p.211):

> If the teenager has a problem meeting a certain responsibility, we should not make the teen's problem our problem. In deciding what to do in a particular case, consideration would be given to how such a problem would be handled if it

> occurred at our place of business. Although this may seem hard-hearted, it has the greatest benefit for the teenager and for us. If we make a habit of taking on the teenager's responsibilities because we dislike the consequences of failure for him or her, we deprive the young person of a crucial experience of becoming an adult.

In these ways learning personal and social responsibility challenges patterns of egocentrism and entitlement in adolescents, and promotes an outward expansion of interests and involvements.

Summary

Given the conditions of post-modern society, coupled with a marked emphasis upon individual rights and a de-emphasis on social responsibilities, the adolescent identity project is no easy task. An individualistic philosophy with obscure moral and social guidelines poses certain problems to young people. Youth, in making the transition from childhood to adulthood, are typified by a certain degree of anomie. In addition, they are in a struggle to define their own unique ideological framework, and require a template from which to compare and contrast moral, social and spiritual values. Their tasks are made easier by a secure social network in which they can experiment with differing roles. The absence of these features, in addition to economic alienation and a society bereft of community and family, stifles healthy identity development and reduced hopes for attaining a significant role in society.

The importance of constructive, productive, relevant work in relationship to healthy adolescent identity cannot be overemphasized. Mitchell (1975) claims that adolescents need to be involved in activities they consider worthwhile, to contribute to important events in the environment, and to be convinced they can make a difference in society. Youth require meaning and suffer in its absence. Their sense of themselves is strengthened and nourished by undertaking adult responsibilities; from them, adolescents learn about their

capacities and abilities, and internalize and integrate images of themselves into the developing sense of identity. Moreover, work facilitates integration into the economy, which further connects them with society.

The current status of post-modern society presents additional challenges for adolescents striving for adult responsibility. Sebald (1992) observes that in the past, an individual's sense of responsibility derived largely from involvement in familial affairs and chores around the home. In modern society, youth spend less time in the home environment, making sources outside the home more prominent in developing responsibility. This axiom, assuming the accuracy of Mitchell's claims, would make it reasonable to infer that successful entrance into the job market is an essential part of a young person's process toward social responsibility. However, government restraint is eliminating jobs, and those that are available fall in the lower end of the service industry (Howe & Strauss, 1993). This has inflamed anomie and frustrated the identity project for many youth.

Integral to the development of social responsibility is belongingness and connectedness to the larger community. In this setting an individual develops an understanding of the rights of others. Here, they are expected to contribute to the greater cause of the group, and ascertain the importance of blending personal aspirations with betterment of the majority. Furthermore, individuals are held accountable for their actions. Deviations from expected behaviors are confronted, and norms governing appropriate social conduct are enforced. Virtues such as forgiveness, honesty, and trust are modeled from the behavior of adults.

In past times, these lessons were learned through participation in the family, which served as the foundation for interaction with the community. Today, fewer families are intact, and a greater emphasis on individualistic pursuits has reduced the quality of relationships between parents and children. Individuals who experience divorce, or who grow up in a family where a parent(s) is (are) dedicated primarily to career, learn that social

responsibility is subordinated to personal rights. Moreover, such familial environments are increasingly characterized by conflict and stress, and decreasingly encourage positive attributes of interpersonal behavior, such as trust and honesty.

Fragmented family units and greater contact with peers have encouraged youth to maintain independent subcultures. Garbarino (1985) notes that while both peer groups and families provide youth with fundamental needs such as acceptance, belonging, and love, peer groups and gangs have unique norms which define interpersonal conduct. For instance, disagreements are primarily resolved through verbal and physical conflict; leadership status is attained by reputation, aggressiveness and exploitation of others; and deviance from societal norms is more likely to be approved. These differences make it difficult to integrate into society, to learn about the rights of others, and to accept responsibilities, to uphold justice and order in the social structure.

Entitlement among youth, as noted by Piaget and Elkind cannot be separated from their cognitive development. Adolescents are inclined to advance self-interests, to emphasize their rights, and make special claims by nature of their thought process. This, in combination with a social milieu that advocates the supremacy of happiness, freedom, and individualism, has corroborated youth's proclivity for demanding increased personal rights. Mitchell, (1992) provides an appropriate commentary:

> Part of the explanation for the widespread entitlement among youth is that the two most important institutions in their lives, their families and their schools, have given a wide range of benefits to them but have set few requirements for how they ought to function in return. There is little doubt that in our present society, adolescents lie under a regime of social values that allows them to make demands on family, school and society-at-large far more than vice versa. It is, perhaps, from this tradition of being able to make demands without having to accept corresponding duties and responsibilities that irrational and exaggerated entitlement springs (p.112).

Segregation from the adult population has fueled further problems for learning about rights and responsibilities in society. Depersonalization in school, broken families, and high unemployment have made it difficult for youth to develop constructive, growth-enhancing relationships with adults. Consequently, adolescents spend less time relating to and learning from adults. However, consumerism and materialism are highly visible to youth. The mass marketing of products and ideals about "the good life" are presented in the absence of appropriate guidelines for achieving such goals. Youth are left to their own devices to learn about such important matters. Such features of social life make it difficult for youths to be trained for the demands of membership to society.

Violence, as noted in Chapter Three, is a complex problem, with many factors related to its etiology. There are no simple solutions that can be used to eliminate it. However, it would seem that individuals who are immersed in a community, one which provides emotional and social support in combination with responsibilities required for the upkeep of that community, would be less likely to resort to violent behavior. Certainly such a community is ideal. Yet, certain features of youth do not change, as authors such as Erikson, Elkind and Mitchell have found. A void of decent opportunity and a paucity appropriate emotional guidance is likely correlated with the rise of violence among adolescents today. Thus, if youth violence is to be appropriately addressed, we must consider the role which rights, and responsibilities play in adolescent development.

CHAPTER 5

Negative Identity

Introduction

Of the many demeanors that accompany the adolescent identity project, perhaps the most perplexing is that of negativism. In some adolescents, negativity explodes as sudden, short-lived outbursts; yet for others, it is a way of life. Those immersed in a lifestyle of negativism are continually angry and defiant; they seem to make the worst of every opportunity presented to them. The vehemence of their actions appears to lack rhyme or reason; nothing seems to appease their appetite for conflict. Confrontation with authority figures, activities with violent outcomes are commonplace. Their behavior interrupts the environment in which they live and brings distress to the lives of those who surround them. To the parent, youth worker or therapist involved with such youth, few explanations adequately account for the instability of their.

The focus of this chapter is on negativity in adolescence. Erikson's concept of negative identity will be described and explored. Beyond describing features associated with negative identity, several hypothesis concerning its etiology will be discussed. No theories presently provide a comprehensive account for negativity among youth, or for the growing violence among them. However, recent theorizing has provided some plausible explanations which help to account for these trends. This chapter will discuss several of these theories.

Defining Negative Identity

The majority of youth, despite the complexity of the maturation process, are able to integrate themselves into society; they survive the pressure and stress of adolescence to become contributing members within their social environment. However, for some individuals, the messages of socialization simply do not take hold. These individuals have a lifestyle characterized by instability and hostility; they appear to take a certain pride in

opposing the status quo; theirs is a posture of opposition. There appears to be no specific conditions which elicit their labile emotions, they simply hate. Defiance of authority is a hallmark of their behavior; parents, teachers, and the police are targets of their anger. Little progress is made by rehabilitative efforts, and those who attempt to provide these angry youth with love and care often receive a cold, spurnful response.

For some defiant youth, their personal history is harmonious with their chaotic lifestyle. An abysmal childhood scarred by abuse and neglect provides a feasible explanation for their erratic behavior. Having never experienced a secure, healthy home-life, it is difficult for them to act in a trustful manner. However, for others, the conditions of their upbringing are at odds with their distressed lifestyle. These youth appear to have grown up in a supportive home environment; they have been given opportunities and they have experienced success. Yet these youth "choose" a lifestyle of negativity and diminishment.

Regardless of the variations in the backgrounds of these youth, they adopt values which are diametrically contrasted with that of society at large. Having failed to define themselves in line with the expectations of others, they become identified with doing the opposite of what others expect of them, and seek to forge out an identity of their own. Thus negative identity is "expressed in a scornful and snobbish hostility toward the roles offered as proper and desirable in one's family or immediate community" (Erikson, 1959, p. 129). Such an individual ignores input from others to pursue a lifestyle harmonious with inner ideals, no matter how destructive they may be.

Erikson and Negative Identity

In Erikson's conceptualization of negative identity it is much more than mere episodes of defiant behavior, it is a lifestyle. Adolescence, like other stages of development, contain its share of idiosyncratic behaviors. Youth, in defining an identity, often question and compare their ideological values with those of their parents. This process involves conflict

and argument; many eruptions which parents interpret as rebelliousness are, in fact, part of the separation-individuation process described by Blos (1967).

In contrast, individuals who adopt a negative identity actively and purposefully engage in doing things opposite of what's expected of them. Their behavior does not merely stem from fluctuations in mood, or from an immaturity. It is intentionally aimed at bringing strife and chaos to a situation. They skeptically analyze any positive situation and are quick to point out possible short-comings. Life is viewed through a negative lens and they see themselves as trapped by society into traveling a path of inevitable failure. Erikson (1959, p.129) notes that to these individuals, "life and strength seem to exist only where one is not, while decay and danger threaten wherever one happens to be."

In some sense, negative identity is a reaction against futility. As chapter 1 delineated, the crux of the identity project is a striving for significance. Erikson claims that adolescents "would rather be a somebody than a nobody" (1967, p144). To lack self-definition and exist in a life devoid of significance is to engage nihilism. For adolescents, their life must mean something. Thus, to be all bad is better than being a little good. When youth view themselves as incapable of attaining significance, they are faced with resolving the anxiety of identity diffusion. Mitchell (1992) defines negative identity as:

> a coping style adopted by youth who have ideals paraded before them which seem unattainable, or equally important, by youth who believe that others have already attained these ideals with such a high level of superiority that they could never equal them (p.156).

John Hinckley Jr. illustrates an example of an individual who when faced with resolving the anxiety of insignificance, choose a negative identity. A high achiever in elementary school, successive failures in athletics and academics during middle school left the once enthusiastic individual withdrawn and isolated in his teen years. Hinckley was raised in a family that stressed success, and both his older brother and sister prospered in athletics, scholastics and as social leaders. In Erikson's terms, Hinckley's older siblings

preempted all of the personal identities held out as valuable by his parents. As a result, he adopted an identity of extremism, aloneness and social disruption - the opposite of what his parents valued (Elkind, 1981). In the end, John Hinckley Jr. attempted to assassinate president Ronald Reagan.

Erikson argues that among youth with a negative identity there resides a hostility toward roles offered in one's family or community. These individuals choose the opposite of what is expected; many of the values and traditions of society are scorned and rejected. These individuals find themselves involved in the activities for which they have been adamantly warned against. They do the things they were specifically told not to do. Erikson states "negative identity is an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which at critical stages of development, had been presented to the individual as mostly undesirable or dangerous (1967, p.131).

In some ways, negative identity is a reaction against the plans and wishes of parents. Adolescents who are expected to blindly conform to parental values and/or to follow in their parents' occupational footsteps are prime candidates for negative identity. These individuals believe that the pleas and directional assertions made by significant others proves that they want to control and oppress. Mastery over their own affairs is resolved by adopting a lifestyle opposite to what is expected. Thus, in attempting to assert their wishes above their parents, adolescents may become everything their parents hate. Again, it is from Erikson (1959, p. 131) that insight is gained into this matter.

> In other cases the negative identity is dictated by the necessity of finding and defending a niche of one's own against the excessive ideals either demanded by morbidly ambitious parents or seemingly already realized by actually superior ones: in both cases the parents' weaknesses and unexpressed wishes are recognized by the child with catastrophic clarity.

Patterns of rebellious behavior among youth may also be an attention-seeking ploy to elicit parents' emotional involvement. Having failed to gain parental favor through positive

achievements, rebelling against parental demands, getting into fights, even engaging in criminal activity, become means to gain parental love. Mitchell (1992) states, "for many adolescents, negative identity, when all is said and done, is primarily an attempt to strike out against their parents" (p.157).

For some teens, the task of integrating one's childhood self into one's present identity is too difficult. It becomes much easier to reject the past, to "start over," than to make sense of their turmoiled past. Too many hurts and disappointments have made it arduous to remain hopeful, discover a sense of self-worth, and believe they can make something of their life. Therefore, in choosing a negative identity, these youth construct a new "me," an identity different from the one that existed in childhood. This is a more controlled identity; failure and pain are expected. Seeing oneself as undeserving of success insulates one from the agony of disappointment. Although such a choice leads to under achievement, one's expectations and hopes are not continually shattered.

> For some troubled adolescents, it is better to be somebody totally other than what existed during childhood rather than struggle to reintegrate the past into a present and future having some continuity with one's previous existence. There is often much relief following the choice of a negative identity, however destructive that solution may ultimately be (Kroger, 1989, p. 16-17).

The Choice of Negative Identity

What is perhaps most perplexing about individuals who evolve a negative identity are their motives for doing so. After all, what is there to gain from a lifestyle of negativity? Conflict, altercations with the law, even incarceration are salient features of a delinquent's lifestyle. Moreover, with the dawning of formal operations, adolescents are acutely aware of the turmoil they are likely to endure because of their negative behavior.

Erikson presents further hypotheses as to why adolescents choose a negative identity. He surmises that total identification with doing what one is least suppose to be enables the

individual to counteract the anxiety of identity diffusion. Instead of wrestling with the futility and directionlessness, preoccupation with more immediate events deflect concern about the future. "In the delinquent state, any future perspective, with its demands and uncertainties, is overruled by the dominant emphasis on short-range goals serving, say, a need to "get at somebody," or to just "do something" or "go somewhere" (1959, p. 162). Thus, in the absence of future promise for achievement and position in society, preoccupying oneself with getting into trouble provides purpose and control instead of an empty, directionless existence.

Second, the choice of negative identity is interwoven with the striving for significance. The mastery of work skills, and attaining a work status is at the core of identity formation in any culture. What drives adolescents to making vocational (and other) commitments is the concept of fidelity, which Mitchell (1992) describes as a "predisposition to faithfulness and commitment, the impulse to affix themselves to something or someone" (p. 131). Individuals denied the opportunity to engage in meaningful work are deprived of essential experiences required for identity. However, the energy of fidelity remains a vital force. Those who cannot express their commitments in a positive context, find some satisfaction in destructiveness. Rather than experiencing the shame, worthlessness and lack of self-definition that accompany identity diffusion, the adopting of a negative identity enables adolescents to commit themselves to achieving certain ends, even when they are violent or destructive.

Both Erikson (1950) and Marcia (1966) reason that commitments to ideological, vocational and romantic ends enable an adolescent to differentiate themselves from others and to establish self-sameness. Individuals who have not made these commitments are prone to identity diffusion and more likely experience anomie in society. Moreover, those not connected with society are less prone to uphold civil duties and obligations. In fact, Erikson believes that among those who do not find meaningful roles during adolescence, "delinquent and psychotic incidents are not uncommon (1950, p. 228). Erikson believed

that essential to reintegration of delinquents into society was the promise that these individuals could attain identities other than their negative identity. These identities would be sustained by renewed vocational and ideological commitments within society.

Research has supported some of Erikson's arguments. For instance, Rettig (1979) investigated students who dropped out of school and found that they experienced alienation from their classmates, school, and society in general. Many responded to this alienation with rebellious or delinquent behavior. They were labeled "rebels," "delinquents," roles easily assumed but difficult to shed. Many of these individuals continued to fulfill the labels given to them and engaged in years of crime and deviance. Rettig explains the process:

> Cast in this role (of delinquency or rebellion), he is not only subject to the protection and control of special "professional organizations, he is systematically denied access or re-entry or organizational opportunities that would afford him a legitimate identity (p. 1)

Thus, Erikson's argued that integration into society and acquiring an identity in harmony with societal expectations is best facilitated through vocational involvement.

Current Understanding of Negative Identity

Erikson's concept of negative identity emphasizes intense conflicts within the superego, anxiety associated with identity diffusion, and pathology of the ego identity. He argues that these factors play leading roles in individuals who assume a negative identity. However, this explanation falls short in providing a complete explanation of negative identity. First, some youth experience considerable turmoil in their childhood, have few opportunities for development of their potential, yet they are able to establish an integrated sense of identity. Second, some individuals who experience minimal adversity in their home-life appear to have solid ego strength and do not demonstrate symptoms of psychopathology, yet they reject the roles their parents wish them to fill. These youth seem determined to follow their own direction, despite punishment and chastisement to the

contrary. The defiance, rebellion and violence these individuals exhibit is not easily explained. For these individuals Erikson's explanation of negative identity seems to fall short.

Current conceptualizations of negative identity have acquired a much broader meaning than Erikson's original usage. Some authors, such as Nielsen (1991) use the term to describe any act of defiance against authority, or choice which opposes parental demands. Yet despite their more generalized meaning, these explanations still do not account for outrageous, destructive actions of some youth. An emotionally stable family, with an absence of pathology does not guarantee that an adolescent will not become rebellious or chronically negative (some evidence suggests that an intact and nurturing family unit remains the best solution for adequately meeting the emotional, social and identity needs of children and adolescents (Dafoe-Whitehead, 1993; Minuchin, 1984; Baumrind, 1989; Peck, 1978). It is to sociological hypotheses of negativism in youth that I now turn.

Sociological Theories of Negative Identity

As discussed in chapter 2, Erikson argued that society played a significant role in shaping personal identity. Several sociological theories also speak to the concept of negative identity, especially those of Emile Durkheim (1897/1951), Robert Merton (1949) and Hans Sebald (1992). While these individuals do not discuss negative identity directly, they describe certain conditions within the social structure which abet aberrant behaviors concomitant with negative identity, violence being primary among them. Two concepts will be emphasized: anomie and alienation, the purpose being to discuss these theories and concepts, and to establish meaningful links with negative identity.

Durkheim and Anomie

Emile Durkheim, a 19th century analyst of industrial society, has been called the founder of modern sociology. Durkheim's major interests were with theories of social

integration. *Suicide*, (1897) his most influential work, provides us with the concepts relevant to the immediate topics of investigation.

Durkheim argued that in society there are certain social forces which bind people together. In primitive, agrarian societies individuals are relatively self-sufficient and social bonds such as kinship and neighborliness bring people together. In industrialized societies, the division of labor becomes more complex and social relations are much more convoluted and compartmentalized. In this context, Durkheim felt there is a need for greater control and organization of social interaction. He believed that the values and norms of a society are the instrument which provide the appropriate governing required for cohesive social interaction.

Durkheim believed that during periods of rapid industrial growth, a breakdown within the social structure would occur. He used the concept of anomie to describe the state in which society's norms and goals are no longer capable of exerting social control over its members, and the individual, rather than the group, would determine what goals should be sought at and to what degree. The individual, however, is fundamentally incapable of providing meaningful limits to his own desires and is thus doomed to a life of constant seeking without genuine fulfillment. At the individual level, Durkheim described the experience of anomie in terms of three characteristics: "a painful uneasiness or anxiety, a feeling of separation from the group or of isolation from group standards, a feeling of pointlessness or that no certain goals exist." (Spaulding and Simpson, 1951, pp. 4-5). Durkheim believed that because anomie is a socially constructed phenomenon, it has specific implications for the individual.

Robert Merton and Anomie

Robert Merton's theory of anomie (1959), like Durkheim's, explains deviant behavior as a socially constructed phenomenon. Merton's guiding assumption is that in our society dominant emphasis is placed upon success and achievement. These goals revolve around

occupational, monetary, and material concerns, but also include intrapersonal dimensions such as leadership and independence. Merton contends that the means of attaining these goals are unevenly distributed in society. Individuals within the lower classes of society as well as racial and ethnic minorities are distinctly disadvantaged within the social hierarchy. They lack the educational opportunities, social resources and often the familial support of more affluent individuals. Therefore, the means for obtaining goals ascribed by our culture is much more difficult for members from these groups. Anomie is a product of this disparity. He explains (1957, p. 136)

> First, incentives for success are provided by the established values of the culture; and second, the avenues available for moving toward this goal are largely limited by the class structure to those of deviant behavior. Recourse to legitimate channels for "getting in the money" is limited by class structure which is not fully open at each level to men of good capacity.

The lack of integration between the dominant cultural values and socially structured access to these values engenders strain and a breakdown of normative consensus. This kind of anomic social conditions leads to illegitimate means of attaining cultural goals. From this hypothesis, Merton predicts more crime among the lower classes or from minority groups who are, for the most part, at an economic, and social disadvantage compared to those in the higher classes.

Merton, like Durkheim, believed that anomie occurs as a result of conditions within the social structure, but has implications for the individual. His concept of individual anomie is explained by Robert MacIver (1950) "Anomie signifies the state of mind of one who has been pulled up from his moral roots, who has no longer any standards but only for disconnected urges, who has no longer any sense of continuity, of folk, of obligation (p.84).

Merton's theory helps to explain the over representation of working-class persons in the criminal population, as well as making sense of the higher rates among ethnic

minorities. However, Merton's theory fails to provide a comprehensive explanation for crime and violence. First, his theory cannot explain why certain members of the deprived population commit crimes while others do not. Second, his theory does not explain why certain members of the upper classes commit crimes. Finally, using his theory as a starting point, one cannot account for crimes other than those caused by the disparity between the "have's" and the "have not's." For instance, what motivates behaviors such as gang shootings which are not aimed at balancing the disparity that exists in society. The motivation for some violence stems from causes which Merton did not seem to recognize. Despite these weaknesses in his theory of anomie, several of his theoretical formulations can be productively applied to negative identity during adolescent years.

Adolescents and Anomie

The experience of anomie is particularly strong for adolescents in contemporary society for three reasons. First, in making the transition from the world of a child to that of an adult, adolescents are vulnerable to a certain degree of anomie; there is a sense of loss that comes as one's childlike demeanor is discontinued and emerging adult mannerisms have not yet taken hold. Moreover, adolescents have a strong belief in the heightened uniqueness of their experience (as described by Elkind's concepts of imaginary audience and personal fable). Their perception that "no one can truly understands what they are going through" magnifies the experience of anomie.

Second, our post-modern society emphasizes individual success and achievement . Bellah and associates (1985) found the dominant messages that youth receive in American society were what is labeled as "instrumental individualism" and "expressive individualism." The former emphasizes achievement in financial, occupational and social domains, while the goal of the latter is ontological fulfillment and happiness. Thus, many youth feel driven to material acquisition, but are led to believe they ought to be happy and content with themselves as they are.

However, the means for achieving success are limited for youth, especially among those in the lower socio-economic class. For instance, few jobs that carry substantial responsibility are available to youth; the majority of jobs that are available are in the lower end of the service field (Howe & Strauss, 1993). Furthermore, entrance into a majority of entry-level positions now has the minimal requirement of completing high school and may require additional years of training at a technical college. For those able to sustain the pressures of academic life, who have sufficient finances, and who have supportive social backing, the chances of finding a suitable job are reasonably good. But for individuals who lack such resources, the peril of failure is as a clear possibility.

Finally, the rapid changes that have taken place in the economic, social and political order have much to do with the rise of anomie (Sebald, 1992; Mizruchi, 1964). In the early years of America and Canada, the economic order was largely agrarian and units within society were small and fairly homogeneous. The governing values were, for the most part, based in traditional Judeo-Christianity and were, for the most part, widely accepted. However, with the rise of capitalism, individualism and democracy, many traditional values were challenged and transformed. It is now difficult for these values to maintain ascendancy when the presumed sanctity of their roots is challenged by the secular ideas which propel rationalism and science (Mizruchi, 1964). Therefore, many individuals in contemporary Western society experience anomie as a result of having cultural ideals paraded before them, yet who receive little genuine fulfillment upon attaining them.

Therefore, anomie becomes one of the defining features of adolescent life. Its presence is pervasive, influencing every race, age, and socio-economic status. However, as emphasized by Durkheim and Merton, anomie may be experienced in greater degree by those who are economically or socially disadvantaged. Nonetheless, with anomie's prominence, youth must respond in some way. The variation in responses is as divergent as the uniqueness of the individuals themselves. However, certain behaviors can be

clustered into a general category. Violence is one such reaction, the nature of which will be discussed shortly.

Hans Sebald and Alienation

Hans Sebald provides a provocative investigation of adolescence in, *Adolescence, a Social Psychological Analysis* (1992). He gives considerable attention to the rise of youth movements that have occurred during previous decades: "vehement uprisings of restless youth have shaken American society, indeed most of the Western world." Sebald's analysis of activism and radicalism among adolescents places special emphasis upon the concept of alienation. It is his belief that it has played a major role in the trend toward violence among the adolescent population.

Before an elucidation of Sebald's ideas, a definition of alienation is in order. The Oxford dictionary defines alienation as act of estranging, or state of estrangement in feeling or affect; to be distance or disconnected with someone. To be alienated means to have the feelings or affections from others turned away from yourself. This description is similar to anomie, since both concepts imply a sense of meaninglessness. Although Sebald utilizes both concepts in his descriptions of post-modern youth, the two concepts are not synonymous. Alienation is regarded by sociologists as a subjective concept, one that involves the mental states and feelings experienced by an individual. On the other hand, anomie is treated as an objective concept. It is observed in one's behaviors and actions. Anomie is inferred from people's actions, as opposed to alienation which can be measured empirically.

Sebald views the proclivity of youth to form gangs and engage in violence as a social movement. He cites the mass society, social class aspiration, personal pathologies, the search for meaning and alienation as reasons for participating in such activities. In addition, North American adolescents are especially receptive to activist ideas because they are looking for an escape from the alienation inherent to an anomic society. He states

"Hundreds of thousands of modern American youth struggle to overcome alienation and to supplant anomie by meaning or a cause (1992, p. 300). Gang membership has become attractive to youth struggling against anomie and alienation because it offers a cause, a sense of destiny and a sense of community.

Sebald views alienation as coming from four sources. First, the period of adolescence itself poses a problem of alienation. The transition from childhood to adulthood already contains its idiosyncrasies of awkwardness and instability. Youth look for a place to belong, to be accepted, and to prove themselves. Yet adolescents have been denied productive roles; they required to attend schools for increasing lengths of time before they become eligible to participate in the work force. In this context, they feel alienation from being segregated from others as well as the futility of living without significant contribution. "They (youth) feel like aliens in the system, fail to establish a sense of belonging, and develop a rejecting mood in return (p. 300).

Second, rapid social change has encouraged alienation through a loss of tradition. The technological dynamics of postindustrial society, the plethora of career and entertainment avenues, have created an uncertainty about the future. In the wake of such freedoms, fear of the unknown has mounted. In addition, the centrality, simplicity and richness found in family and community living have been subordinated to the pursuit of private success and personal happiness.

Third, Sebald contends that youth have a natural aversion to "ideational vacuums" and demand direction and guidance from their elders. They are particularly attracted to participate in movements that have definitive goals and purposes (as evidenced by their susceptibility to cults). Yet anomie has become pervasive in our culture. Values, and morals are largely left up to the individual, and those who advocate moral absolutism are reprimanded for imposing their belief system upon others. Sebald suggests that freedom to choose among a plethora of vocational and entertainment avenues and social relationships without much parental guidance has increased alienation among youth.

Finally, Sebald argues that alienation is no longer solely found among the poor, unemployed or ethnic minorities, but has pervaded the upper socio-economic classes of society as well. He cites a survey of disturbed youth which found that dissatisfaction was prevalent among many individuals who come from high-income families. Although there are many potential explanations, Sebald contends that the primary cause lies in the affluent and comfortable background that prevents many children from earning their own livelihoods and working their way through college. Essentially, these youth are bored. He explains: "Life has started them out without a struggle - thus they invent one: the reform or overthrow of a system shot through with injustices and social ills, none of which is personally relevant to them (1992, p. 301).

Sebald is quick to point out that alienation, although potentially distressing, is not totally negative. He notes that among societies where the role's of youth are uncertain and adult responsibilities and privileges are delayed, there is a predisposition among the younger generation to be adaptable, and innovative. In a technological society, these skills are of paramount importance. In some sense, these qualities are a payoff for the anxiety and rebellion seen in youth.

In summary, Sebald believes that alienation has contributed to the unsettled behavior of adolescents. He notes that post-modern America has provided its youth freedoms, material goods, and opportunities for personal advancement. Yet, in the process, adolescents have been largely left on their own to determine what values, security, and future they want. In a sense, the adult world has segregated them from the important machinery of society, presented them with scattered goals and ideals, and then left them on their own. Sebald argues that the countercultural movements of youth are a reaction to this parental abandonment.

Anomie, Alienation and Negative Identity

Durkheim, Merton and Sebald discussed anomie and alienation in the context of society. Although shortcomings are found in each theory, they provide thoughtful suggestions for an analysis of negative identity during adolescence. Essentially, these theories suggest three things. First, the Western world's transition to a post-modernism has led to value and ideology changes. Second, a product of this social transition is a greater degree of anomie and alienation among youth. Third, these forces have been an impetus to youthful agitation and violence.

The subjective feeling of alienation and anomie is both uncomfortable and distressing. In young children, the impact of unwanted separation from significant others is readily viewed. It is traumatic. Similarly, the feeling of isolation, of aloneness and despair associated with alienation and anomie is an equally powerful feeling. Moreover, to adolescents, the sense of specialness in the belief that their experiences is unique to all others, only fuels the intensity of their feelings.

Negative identity is an adaptive alternative to anomie and alienation for several reasons. First, negative identity helps to combat the meaninglessness of anomie and alienation. As indicated in previous chapters, the crux of the identity project is attaining a sense of significance as well as achieving independence. Yet, for some adolescents, particularly those from a lower socio-economic status, the possibility of attaining societal goals such as monetary success and occupational prowess is relatively hopeless. For those who struggle in an academic environment the promise of getting a job without a high school diploma holds even less promise. Therefore, adopting a lifestyle of negativism, defiance, and rebellion provides youth with a sense of purpose and identity. Rollo May writes:

> No human being can exist for long without some sense of his own significance. Whether he gets it by shooting a haphazard victim on the streets,...or by rebellion, or by psychotic demands in hospital, he must be able

> to feel this I-count-for-something and be able to live out that felt significance (1972, p. 37).

Michael Apter (1983) suggests that negativism plays an important, even vital, role in adolescence. He notes that the process of distinguishing oneself is established through both positive and negative behaviors. The ability to define oneself also comes from determining what one is not, what one disdains, and those things that one is opposed to. He notes that negativism "helps the individual to feel distinctive in terms of "where he or she stands" in relation to a variety of issues" (p. 79).

In spite of the functional aspects of negativism, the problem for many youth is that it is not one way of defining themselves, it is the only way. Continually faced with anomie and alienation from families, school, and the community, these youth resort to lashing out against others, defying authority, and destroying property. The initial reinforcement of attention and recognition they receive leads them to continue their disruptive behavior. Eventually, their behavioral repertoire that gains notoriety consists of disturbed, even pathological responses. Thus, negative identity is achieved. Mitchell (1992, p. 165) explains the process:

> The reactions this negative behavior incites from parents, teachers, or peers forces the youngster to defend his or her actions by creating an identity of opposition to the hated, criticizing others. Once such an identity is forged the youngster defines his or her self within these very negations. Such self-definition firms their opposition with anyone who is not a total ally.

Second, adopting a negative identity enables youth to release their anger. Strong emotions are a significant part of adolescent life. Adolescents are "sensationalized" by the adrenaline rush of "being on the edge." Rage and anger allow adolescents to express the core of their being since egocentric priority is expressed through emotional energy. Therefore, youth who feel alienated from their peers, school or community, who are denied

opportunities which others have, and who feel unjustly treated, have pent up hostility which requires expression.

For most youth anger is triggered by frustrating events of daily life. Its expression occurs as short-lived outbursts, "blowing off steam." However, for youth who experience sustained anomie or profound alienation (in the context of a chaotic home environment, or through failure in social, educational, or athletic avenues) anger is deep and enduring. For some youth, the vehemence of their actions is more easily justified (at least to themselves) when they define themselves as a "rebel" or "outcast." Adopting this role enables them to express their anger and hatred without having to account for it. They do not have to reconcile or confront the anger or hurt that lies within them; they can just be angry.

Finally, the actions and behaviors associated with negative identity are not easily ignored; they bring attention to the problem of anomie and alienation. For instance, a youth who feels alienated within a classroom can gain immediate attention through acting inappropriately. On a grander scale, the violence of many youths has brought swift attention to the young offender. Recently, in Edmonton, the murder of a city mother by three youths brought dramatic reaction from the community. This incident has sparked changes in the Young Offenders Act, and a re-evaluation of what society is doing to help troubled youth.

For adolescents, receiving recognition, leaving their stamp, are of paramount importance. They do not deal well with rejection, loneliness, and meaninglessness. Acceptance, excitement, and achievement are what motivates them. The absence of these things creates a vacuum, one that must be filled, no matter where or how its found. Violence is a way of dealing with emptiness and purposelessness. It is an extremist reaction, but for some adolescents it is the only response they can muster to a life consumed by alienation and anomie.

Summary

Negativism can take many forms, including speaking disrespectfully towards authority figures, engaging in forbidden activities, fighting or maiming others. In its more serious form, negativism results in physical assault or murder. Often these behaviors occur with little rhyme or reason, even youths themselves cannot account for their negative demeanor. Most adults involved with youth view these idiosyncrasies as distressing results of immaturity. Yet some investigators, such as Apter, have suggested that negativism is an important part of the development process, something which helps youth to establish and define their identity. He believes that standing in opposition to others is necessary in helping the young person attain uniqueness and distinctiveness. In this way, negativism is normalized.

For some youth defiance, anger and rebellion are not just periodic behaviors that lessen with maturity, they are a way of life. Few rehabilitative interventions penetrate the hardness of these youngsters; they appear to delight in creating distress in the lives of others and they show little remorse for their harmful actions. They stand in opposition to those who achieve or create. Their own failure is projected onto others, and they see life through a bitter, angry lens. According Erik Erikson, one of the leading authorities on adolescents and identity in our time, these individuals have developed a "negative identity."

To Erikson conflicts within ego identity precipitate negative identity. Their personal history is marred by violated trust, shame and doubt. Thus the task of integrating their erratic past into their present identity is simply too much for them. They would rather adopt a "new me" than confront the pain which was so much a part of their childhood. In some sense, it is a desperate attempt to regain mastery over their ailing world rather face continued disappointment and hopelessness.

Negative identity, in this psychodynamic context, represents a total identification with what "one is least supposed to be." For youth, the search for significance and the ability to leave their mark is integral to the identity project. Their lives must mean something. In the

absence of hope, or the realization that one's action cannot equal the standards or status reached by others, becoming the opposite of what one should be helps combat the anxiety of identity diffusion. Fulfilling a role opposite to what one is expected enables the individual to gain notoriety and significance. As Erikson states, "the late adolescent, would rather be nobody or somebody bad, or indeed, dead...than be not-quite-somebody" (Erikson, 1959).

Free will is important to our concerns here. Some youth respond with disdain to the pressure of fulfilling expected roles in the absence of consideration for their feelings. They resist demands placed upon them by family or community members in which they are expected to conform to a preordained image. For these individuals, resentment towards parents appears to be a prominent motivating factor in their identification with negative ideals.

While Erikson provides a vivid account of youth who adopt negative identity, his explanations are not the final word on the topic. For some individuals, the messages of socialization simply do not take hold. Their lives are not racked with conflict and they appear to have a sturdy home life where parents encourage but do not rule. From this perspective, a psychological explanation does not seem to account for all of the relevant variables. Therefore, certain sociological explanations of youth negativism and violence were explored in this chapter.

Both Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton put forward theories that discuss a breakdown in the social structure. Slight differences separate Merton's and Durkheim's theories of anomie, but each suggest anomie involves social and cultural phenomena. That is, anomie has sociological roots. The difference between the two theorists is that Merton appears to discuss a more chronic condition of society while Durkheim stresses a condition of crisis. However, both define the condition of anomie in a somewhat similar manner.

The key subjective experiences of anomie are anxiety and meaninglessness. Individual responses to these experiences are as varied as the individuals involved, however certain

general patterns are noted. One is the expression of violence and anger. Sebald argues that much of the gang activity occurring today is a result of alienation from society at large. He believes that adolescents lack direction, guidance and support from the adult generation. As a result, youth are increasingly involved in their own subculture whose predominant goal is to defy and disrupt the values of the older generation. From the perspectives of these authors, negative identity has sociological roots as well as psychological ones.

Although adolescents may respond to the conditions of anomie and alienation present in Western society in a number of ways, adopting a negative identity is advantageous in several ways. First, negative identity combats the instability associated with anomie and alienation. Standing in opposition to others allows youth to distinguish themselves, as well as to leave their mark, two vital forces within youth. Second, negative identity allows individuals to vent anger. The pent-up hostility that resides in some youth is more easily given expression when they adopt an identity concordant with this type of behavior. Finally, negative identity often triggers violence. In a society that spends billions of dollars upon law and order, whose stated values idealize harmony and peace, violence stands in clear opposition to the status quo. Youth who lack direction and significance achieve them through violence.

This chapter has sought to explain Erikson's concept of negative identity in both psychological and sociological terms. Its purpose was to establish links between identity and youth violence. Certainly, negative identity cannot explain all the vehement behavior among adolescents. This chapter has fallen short in discussing why some youth who lack a solid identity fail to engage in violence, or why youth involved in the gang subculture are violent for the sake of violence, barring any feelings of anomie and alienation. However, a dynamic understanding of youth violence must consider identity, alienation and anomie as contributing variables. Future research in these areas should prove productive in our attempt to better understand the role of violence in the adolescent experience.

CHAPTER 6

Summary and Conclusions

North Americans enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. The free enterprise system, coupled with the natural wealth of the land and the entrepreneurial spirit of the people, has produced a flood of goods available to the consumer at a relatively low cost. A plethora of educational and entertainment avenues exist as outlets for self-enhancement or self-gratification. Youth in North American society are afforded many opportunities to achieve success and discover personal enjoyment. In the United States (1992), youth spent approximately 39 billion dollars (Sebald, 1992), a figure that indicates youth have remarkable purchasing power.

With such positive attributes of post-modern society, the question becomes why such instability among the adolescent generation? Specifically, why is there so much violence among youth? The rate and intensity of violence involving children and youths has escalated dramatically in the past several decades. Paradoxically, youth in our North America have much, yet are seeking to destroy each other and the society in which they live. Few answers or solutions have been put forth. Yet to the parent, teacher, and social worker this is becoming a salient issue in everyday living.

The central purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the relationship between identity and violence. It has been argued that the development of a healthy identity is vital for youth to develop their potential. There is ample reason, however, to suspect that youth in North America encounter many obstacles in attaining a coherent, sturdy identity. It appears that in Western society the criteria of identity has diminished, and in many ways youth are denied the mature guidance necessary for the establishment of a healthy identity. As a result, many aberrant behaviors (violence in particular) appear to be a by-product of this deficiency.

The Importance of Identity

Erik Erikson, one of the foremost psychodynamic scholars, has extensively investigated the concept of identity. He argues that the task of developing an identity is crucial to developmental growth (1950; 1959; 1968). In fact, Erikson and other scholars who have been inspired by his theoretical formulations (Marcia, 1966; Elkind, 1981, 1984), stress that identity is of such significance to adolescents that even extreme measures are taken by youth to create an identity. Adolescents' proclivity towards joining cults, gangs, and clubs support this claim.

Erikson expanded upon classic Freudian theory and included a greater emphasis on the ego, an extension of the stages of personality development, and an amplified assessment of society's influence upon personality. Erikson claimed that social response shapes identity formation; affirmation from significant others is vital for fostering a firm sense of identity during adolescents years. Other sources of affirmation, (such as school, peers, employment) that appear later in the maturation process enhance formulation of an integrated self. Both Erikson and Marcia stressed that society must provide promise of a workable and effective life plan through the provision of sanctioned roles. If society fails to create opportunities for genuine contribution to the social order, individual autonomy is stifled. Erikson contended that isolated groups, such as juvenile delinquents, require society's help in shaping a more constructive sense of identity. He also contended that criminality was one outcome of the adult generation failing to provide viable options for youth (Erikson, 1969).

Although most prominent during adolescence, the identity project has roots in childhood and continues to be shaped throughout the life cycle. Both Erikson and David Elkind (1984) view the identity project as a complex, time- consuming process, cultivated and refined by many ingredients. Parental involvement (through support and guidance), commitment to vocational and ideological values, significant contribution in society, role-experimentation, role-modeling and rites of passage all enhance identity formation.

Erikson coined the term "moratorium" to describe a period of time in which adolescents experiment with roles and expectations to be filled later in adult life. He defined the moratorium as an interval in the life cycle where the individual gains social recognition, through personal accomplishments of social significance. In this time period culture helps to enrich and perpetuate itself by enabling individuals to find constructive roles within the existing order.

David Elkind is in agreement with Erikson concerning the importance of a youth moratorium. Elkind claims that the moratorium affords youth some protection from the responsibility of adult life. Without this protection youth are exposed to stress, responsibility and increased pathology. Finally, Elkind contends that the moratorium places youth under the blanket of adult authority, something he sees as helpful to their developing identity. A benevolent authority provides the structure and the guidance youth need for healthy identity development; as well, it serves as an inhibitor of aberrant behavior. When adult authority is undermined, political and legal sources of control are required to constrain (and punish) the delinquent behaviors of youth, a condition Elkind argues is less than ideal.

Erikson and Elkind also contend that healthy identity requires a clearly defined value system against which to test emerging values and beliefs. In defining their growing and changing selves youth need a standard against which to measure the legitimacy of their emerging beliefs. Parents are the standard, although the larger community, the peer group, and intimate friends also influence the individual. Without these sources of guidance and information adolescents are left to their own devices to formulate values and ideals, a situation that recent decades have confirmed to be a counter-productive, even self-destructive way to pursue identity (Sebald 1992; Erikson 1959, 1968; Elkind 1984).

The Present Social Milieu

Given the importance of society's role in identity, an overview of some defining features of our social milieu was given considerable attention in this document. The work of Christopher Lasch (1978, 1984), Hans Sebald (1992), and Amitai Etzioni (1993) was highlighted. These authors provide provocative and insightful analyses of post-modern society. Although their arguments are not universally accepted, the implications of their theories hold significance in the attempt to understand identity and violence in youth.

Christopher Lasch argues that the emergence of entrepreneurial capitalism in post-modern society has promoted consumerism, individualism, and pluralism. Adherents to these philosophies are characterized by a survivalist mentality which encourages "living for the moment," "keeping your options open," and avoidance of moral or emotional commitments. As a result, focus shifts to an obsession with image, with surface appeal, with the avoidance of depth and stability of character. In such a context, identity deteriorates.

Amitai Etzioni explored the concept of entitlement in the American culture. He notes an increasing emphasis on individual rights without a corresponding increase in duty and obligation. As a result, citizens feel they are rightfully entitled to services and freedoms without incurring any responsibilities. Etzioni also contends that rights are increasingly perceived as absolute freedoms. In this context, rights are enforced without respect for those hurt by them. (For instance, some individuals have used freedom of speech to espouse racism.) What is needed, according to Etzioni, is renewed emphasis upon individual responsibility to the local and national community. He explains:

> We need to remind one another that no rights are absolute. Even the freedom of speech, we all know, is refused to people who shout fire in a crowded theater, unless there is fire. Testing those who have the lives of others directly in their hands for drugs, setting up sobriety checkpoints to stop murderous drunk drivers, and asking people whose blood is being tested to allow it to be checked

> for the HIV virus for all reasonable responses to massive threats we must deal with in order to make society work again, (1993, p. 249).

One vital ingredient of a healthy identity that Erikson, Elkind, and Sebald believe is insufficiently emphasized is outlets where youthful energy is channeled into significance and contribution. Traditionally, an individual's identity derived largely from familial participation which served as a context for their relations with the greater community. In post-modern society, the person's identity has come to largely rest on career. Currently many youth are either unable to secure employment, or are forced to further their education for several years before they can find employment. Therefore, they seek identity significance elsewhere.

Lasch, Sebald, and Taylor have argued that there is a notable absence of clearly demarcated values in society. Many parents themselves are confused about what to teach their children. The values of Judeo-Christianity which have prevailed since the European settlement of North America are no longer accepted by many. With the rise of capitalism and individualism these traditional values have been challenged and transformed and it has become difficult for them to maintain ascendancy when the presumed sanctity of their origins is challenged by rationalism and science. Thus relativism (which encourages an individually derived ideology as opposed to a more dogmatic one), while becoming increasingly pertinent throughout the life span, has become problematic for adolescents whose primary task is to construct an identity based upon firmness of convictions, and a fairly stable ideological framework.

Hans Sebald (1992), like Christopher Lasch, points to transitions in post-modern society that make it difficult for adolescents to develop healthy identity. He notes that with the pursuit of materialism and the ascendance of individual rights, there has been a decreasing emphasis upon community and family values. These institutions provide a context in which youth learn responsibilities and duties necessary to become contributing members of society. As a result of these absences in their lives, many youth are left on

their own to make important decisions regarding values, beliefs and occupations, which, in turn, has led to increased anomie and disenfranchisement.

Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton have articulated the concept of anomie with insightful fluency. Essentially, these scholars defined anomie as the state in which society's norms and goals no longer exert social control over its members, and the individual (rather than the group) determines what goals should be desired and how they should be pursued. Sebald contends that anomie is pervasive in American society, that the cultural goals of monetary and occupational success are emphasized yet feasible ways of achieving them are not provided. This creates apathy among some youth, and inclines them to reject goals and norms altogether. To fill their empty existence, adolescents have pursued other outlets, some being self-destructive and others socially destructive.

Furthermore, Sebald argues that youth have largely been isolated and segregated from the world of adults. They have been alienated from the work force and required to attend schools for increasing periods of time. As a result, the time frame of adolescence has been lengthened dramatically since the turn of the century. One outcome of this transition is that youth take much longer to establish themselves in a vocation which, in turn, delays the process of identity formation. The "in between time," combined with youthful proclivity towards finding meaning and purpose has contributed to the rise of "counter" movements. Sebald sees the growing gang activity and violence among youth as a product of anomie and alienation.

One final note. It should be emphasized that not all changes in society have a negative impact on youth. In fact, if one was to compare the quality of life for adolescents at the turn of the century with adolescents in today's culture, unquestionably the opportunities and legislated protection afforded to youth in the 1990's are superior. Child labor laws now protect youth from exploitation in the labor market; the government ensures that children receive minimal health care; and compulsory school offers education to all youngsters, regardless of sex, race or socio-economic status.

Perhaps the greatest historical change in the youth culture pertains to the freedoms they currently enjoy. A diversity of occupations enable youth to search for employment in fields that utilizes their unique abilities; they are no longer forced into the same jobs that their parents held. With delayed entrance into the work force and fewer responsibilities to their immediate community, adolescents have more time for self-discovery. They are able to explore various social roles through dating, participation in social clubs (like boy scouts or girl guides), or athletic involvement. These opportunities have greatly enhanced the potential to achieve and produce in modern society.

The technological saturation that has evolved in our culture, in spite of its complexity, has encouraged youth to develop new skills and abilities; it has challenged them to become more adaptable and flexible. Sebald notes that the alienation youth have felt in society has generated a readiness to experiment with alternative to existing institutions, thus promoting innovation and change. He contends that both anomie and alienation among youth today is a price being paid for the rapid industrial growth of the last century. So we are left with something of an irony. On the one hand, opportunities are greater than they have been in the past, and on the other hand, violence is also on the increase.

Numerous indicators suggest that in the absence of a healthy identity adolescents are prone to an increase in pathological behavior. Erikson has advocated the importance of making commitments (vocational, ideological, romantic) in the adolescent transition. These commitments enable an individual to better fulfill social roles, to integrate into society and to enhance self-definition in a way that also enhances society.

It appears that adolescents in post-modern society face many new challenges in trying to establish a stable identity. Perhaps this has contributed to the growing rates of criminality and violence.

Image versus Identity

First, as suggested by Christopher Lasch, the constant parading of consumer ideals has encouraged among youth the pursuit of image over identity. Our society, primarily through advertising, promotes a fascination with surface appearance; it encourages conformism to fashions trends, to "look good, and feel great." Insinuated through these messages is that one will find happiness once one has attained the image. These messages have given youth a false anticipation that success, status and recognition come instantly with the correct acquisitions.

As Elkind noted, individuals with a poorly integrated sense of self, one based upon responding to the pressures and influences of others, are at-risk to societal stress. These youth have not developed the core of stability that enables them to deal with new situations in terms of past experiences. Elkind argues that society, through promoting "image idealism," has denied teenagers full development of their personality and character. As a result, many of the behaviors among youth, such as suicide, substance abuse and violence, are a consequence of the inability to cope with the pressures and demands of adult life.

Confusion About Ideology and Moral Values

The lack of commitment and unwillingness to accept responsibility among youth appears connected with the irresoluteness of moral and familial values. One of the ingredients that Erikson and Marcia emphasized as paramount to the identity project was an ideological framework from which youth individuate. The nuclear family historically provided a framework of ideals and values. With the rise of pluralism (and rejection of Judeo-Christian values) many parents struggle with teaching their children a concrete set of values and beliefs. Spiritual values have virtually been eliminated as an important element in identity development. As the incidence of family breakdown increases, fewer adolescents grow up with commitment to "traditional" family values. Moreover, many youth are left on their own to determine private convictions concerning sexuality, drugs,

and school attendance. Yet, the adolescent thought process, as indicated in chapter four, is influenced in serious measure by egocentrism, by affective logic, and by assumptive realities. Therefore, it is not surprising that youth left to their own resourcefulness choose activities harmful to others or themselves. They lack the direction and ideological framework required to make allocentric, responsible decisions.

Significance in Society

It has become increasingly difficult for youth to attain any meaningful sense of significance. They are segregated from the adult world through compulsory schooling, which conveys to them the message that they are not needed (or wanted) until they have received their high school diploma. Those who do not have the ability (or desire) to complete high school have little opportunity to integrate, with any degree of success, into the mainstream of society. High unemployment and little opportunity to even secure a step on the corporate ladder have diminished hope for a career. Few rituals other than graduation from high school signify entrance into the adult world. With the continued break-up of the family unit children have less time to celebrate positive achievements and also encounter the grief associated with family disintegration.

It appears, then, that opportunities available to adolescents to receive recognition are limited. Yet the impetus to derive a sense of significance and leave a stamp in this world is a vital force within them. Turning to destructive outlets becomes a release mechanism for some youth. Violence, acts of criminality bring recognition (sometimes even status) from peers, and immediate attention from adults. Encounters with the law bring excitement and adventure, and counteract the anxiety of anomie and alienation. The futility of their lives is transformed into "purpose" when youth adopt an identity that goes against the status quo. From this position, they release free-floating anger against their family and their society both of whom have provided too little supervision and love. They define themselves through their defiance.

Adults and Adolescents

Youth are alienated in many respects. In school, growing class sizes have increasingly distanced youth from the watchful (and helpful) eye of teachers. Many youth live in a home where parents are immersed in their own pursuits resulting in little interaction between the two generations. An established community in which adolescents relate to their elders has eroded and what Elkind calls "marker" accomplishments within that setting have, for the most part, been forgotten. Elkind asserted that the moratorium was important for adolescents to begin to define their place in society. This definition should facilitate their respect for authority and enables them to grow under the leadership of their elders and to accept the discipline and direction required to productively express their creativity and their individuality. Relationships with members of the older generation connect youth with the adult world, and facilitates their transition into society, thereby facilitating the attainment of a sturdy, resilient identity.

Many youth develop their own subculture to fulfill their needs for acceptance and belonging. With the diminishment of family and community values and a proclivity towards pursuing self-interests, fewer parents spend time with their children. A recent study (Dobson, 1993) revealed that the average time of daily interaction between a parent and child (where there was an active conversation) was under five minutes. Such lack of affectional bonding alienates the child from the parent; it stifles the interaction youngsters require to grow and mature. Having few connections with the adult world and ample time on their hands, youth gravitate to activities that often yield no productive outcomes. Senseless gang violence fits this category.

The importance of a healthy parent - teen relationship cannot be overstated. A majority of Canadian teens reported that their relationship with their parents was their primary concern (Bibby & Posterski, 1992). Research suggests a positive correlation between the strength of the adolescent-parent relationship and adolescents' ego identity status (Frank,

Pirsch & Wright, 1990). While parents typically become less of a source of intimate friendship during adolescence, adults who can effectively mirror their child are a source of self-knowledge which enhances their child's identity.

In chapter three the concept of force was described as a vehicle through which control can be established; control, it was argued, does not involve personal consideration. Authority, in contrast, involves wisdom, knowledge and skill. Asserting authority requires gaining the respect of another, and involves role-modeling. It appears that adults in dealing with the aberrant behaviors of youth, have reverted to more force than authority. Revisions to the Young Offenders Act and increasing police patrols are measures of force; they implicate control. This is contrasted with an approach that combines love and discipline. In this context, a parent corrects their child's behavior, but also seeks to reaffirm their relationship with them. This communicates to adolescents that their parents are not trying to control them, but that they are interested in their best interest, their lives. Not all youth respond positively to this treatment, but in terms of the developmental needs of adolescents, use of authority appears to be an effective strategy.

Rights versus Responsibilities

Western societies, through the print of their political constitutions, have encouraged freedom of expression, individual rights, and the pursuit of happiness. Youth in these societies have whole-heartedly adopted this philosophy, sometimes to the detriment of themselves and others. Many have become obsessed with entitlements without understanding the reciprocal duties and obligations required of a contributing member of society. The outlets available to youth tend to focus on self- glorification and self-enhancement. Sports clubs, early college programs and business seminars are geared towards making a success of oneself in society. Few social organizations prepare adolescents to make constructive, meaningful contributions to society, or emphasize responsibility or obligation to the larger community.

Adolescents are often not held responsible for their actions. Juveniles who break the law are often remanded to corrective institutions where they receive three meals a day and a warm bed to sleep. Restitution for damages incurred rarely follows, and taxpayers foot the bill for all expenses related to their acts of violence. If the issue of violence among youth is to be addressed, education to one's social responsibilities and obligations cannot be ignored. Adolescents require socialization which challenges their fundamental egocentrism. Moreover, a zero tolerance attitude toward violence and teaching appropriate conflict resolution skills transmits a definitive message to youth concerning behavioral expectations. The issue of impressing social responsibility upon youngsters, in this author's opinion, is paramount to controlling youth violence.

Connectedness to Society

Erikson (1959, 1968) and Elkind (1984) have advocated that youth be engaged in socially meaningful activity. In their line of reasoning work constitutes a primary expression since it facilitates the adolescents transition into society and enables them to experience connected significance. Work also teaches the responsibilities which come with membership. It provides a diversity of roles and responsibilities which youth can experiment with, and which enables them to develop a sense of continuity and self-sameness.

Presently, many youth face an uncertain future. Unemployment is high among late adolescents, and the jobs that are available are largely in the lower end of the service field. Most entry level positions require training of some sort, which has further delayed adolescent entry into the working world. The prospect of finding a desired career is not promising. In the absence of such hope, youth are redirecting their energy to counter-productive outlets.

The situation for incarcerated juveniles is even more dismal. Few have the social, emotional or economic resources to complete even the basic requirements of high school.

Many return to a home where conflict, poverty, and parental neglect or absence are commonplace. Without appropriate guidance and motivation, they are no better off than before incarceration. Their return to society is overshadowed by their label: juvenile delinquent. They feel both the rejection of society, and succumb to their own shame and self-hatred. Unless these youths are integrated into society, a lifestyle of destructive negativism is likely to follow.

Erikson contended that this population requires society's help in discovering a new sense of identity. This is achieved through the provision of other social roles and opportunities in which they can define themselves. Society must be willing to invest time, money and effort into rehabilitating these individuals through providing them with constructive opportunities. For successful reintegration into society, these individuals need a place to connect with adults, find a significant place in society to rebuild themselves with a purpose that utilizes their abilities and potentials.

Directions for Future Research

This study has investigated the complex relationship between adolescents, identity and violence. The acknowledgment of this interrelationship opens doors to the investigation of a wide variety of questions relating to social influences upon behavior.

1. Investigating the relationship between Marcia's identity status's with incidence of violence would be useful for determining the significance which differing identities play in violent behavior among youth.

2. Further investigation of personal, familial, and social factors associated with young offenders who engage in violent crimes may provide more definitive hypotheses about violence among youth.

3. Investigating the effectiveness of juvenile rehabilitation programs that offer a work experience component and comparing them with those that do not provide work experience would provide useful information about the rehabilitative process.

4. Investigating the relationship between parenting style (using Baumrind's classification system) and levels of violence in youth would be helpful in identifying specific variables associated with a healthy parent-child relationship.

5. Investigating the relationship between teaching non violent conflict resolution skills and corresponding levels of violent behavior in schools would be helpful for designing educational approaches to reduce youth violence.

Identification of the psychological and sociological forces that adversely impact the development of identity in adolescence is important. This knowledge would be useful in providing a greater understanding of the etiology of violence among youth. It may also help facilitate the development of social policies and practices that are better able to help society deal with violence among youth. Given the nature of post-modern society, adolescence are very vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the sociocultural environment. As such, adolescence will require the support of this environment to facilitate successful resolution of the identity project.

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